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A semiotic approach to the Epistle of James: a general interpretation in light of its “synergic pairs”

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**A semiotic approach to the Epistle of James:
a general interpretation in light of its “synergic pairs”**

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Submitted for the degree of PhD

King's College London

2015

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Abstract

This research attempts to interpret, in a semiotic manner, the Epistle of James from the viewpoint of the internality–externality type of synergism, according to which faith and action make an inseparable synergic unit.

The first part of the thesis deals with emphasizing the synergic pairs of the book, observing, according to Dibelius, the fact that faith and action are seen by traditional Jewish religiosity as an indivisible unit. It also underlines the difference between Luther's viewpoint of faith–works unity and a number of modern interpretations. The latter hesitate to take into account James' synergism evoked in 2:22, and conceive a kind of faith, theoretical or intellectual, which consists in its structural separation from acts.

In order to explain the tendency of some contemporary interpretations to differentiate between theoretical and practical faith, or to favour faith to the detriment of acts, and the other way round, this study will tackle, in the second part, Charles Taylor's analysis of modernity and will take into consideration his proposition related to the correction of the modern paradigm. Consequently, my thesis will pursue the conjunction of C.S. Peirce's pragmatic semiotics with Oliver Davies' cosmological semiotics. The result of this synthesis will constitute the object of the third part of this paper, which will end up formulating a methodology that, first of all, confers a non-dualistic rationality from whose perspective I will approach the Epistle of James. Secondly, it facilitates a hermeneutics which will unify meaning and action by integrating, in a reflexive manner, the linear life of the reader within the interpretative proceeding. Thirdly, it puts semiotic-theological instruments of interpreting the epistle at our disposal. In the fourth section, I will pursue an interpretation of the epistle, which will conclude

with the presentation of a possible purpose, structure and progression in James.

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Abbreviations

CP - *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Electronic Edition, 1 June 1994, reproducing vols. I-VI, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931-1935), vols. VII-VIII, ed. Arthur W. Burks (same publisher, 1958).

ABPE – *The Original Aramaic New Testament in Plain English*, trans. David Bauscher (Lulu Publishing, 2007).

ESV – Crossway, *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version, Containing the Old and New Testaments* (Wheaton, Ill., Crossway, 2001)

HCSB – *Study Bible, Holman Christian Standard Bible* (Nashville Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 2010).

ISV – “International Standard Version” (1996-2012), exported from Online Parallel Bible Project, Bible Hub (Biblos.com 2004 – 2014), <http://biblehub.com/isv/james/1.htm>.

NASB – *New American Standard Bible* (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation, 2011)

NLT – “New Living Translation” (1996, 2004, 2007), Online Parallel Bible Project, Bible Hub (Biblos.com 2004 – 2014), <http://biblehub.com/nlt/james/1.htm>.

NRSV – *Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Blue with The Apocrypha* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005).

GWT – *Holy Bible, God’s Word Translation* (Grand Rapids, Mi.,: Baker Publishing Books, 2010).

WEB – “Webster Bible Translation” (2013, 2014) Online Parallel Bible Project. Bible Hub (Biblos.com 2004 – 2014), <http://biblehub.com/wbt/james/1.htm>.

LXX – Septuagint

NT – New Testament

OT – Old Testament

Ex. – Exodus

Lv. – Leviticus

Nm. - Numbers

Deut. & Dt. – Deuteronomy

1, 2 Sm. (a.k.a. 1, 2.Kings.) – 1, 2 Samuel

3, 4 Kgs. – 1, 2 Kings

1, 2 Chr. – 1, 2 Chronicles

1 Esd. – 1 Esdras (1, 2 Esd. – 1, 2 Esdras)

Jdt. - Judith

Tob. – The Book of Tobit

1-4 Mc. – 1-4 Maccabees

Jb. – Job

Ps. – Psalms

Ode. - Odes

Prv. – Proverbs

Wsd. – Wisdom of Solomon

Ps. Sol. – Psalms of Solomon

Is. – Isaiah

Jer. – Jeremiah

Lam. – Lamentations

Sir. – Wisdom of Sirach

Bar. - Baruch
Ez. – Ezekiel
Jl. – Joel
Mal. - Malachi
T. Ash. – Testament of Asher
T. Benj. – Testament of Benjamin
Barn. – Epistle of Barnabas
1, 2 Clem. – 1, 2 Clement
Did – Didache
Mk. – Mark
Lk. – Luke
1, 2 Cor. - 1, 2 Corinthians
Rom. – Romans
Col. – Colossians
Eph. – Ephesians
1 Tim. – 1 Timothy
1 Thess. – 1 Thessalonians
Jas - James

References and quotations of the LXX and Apocrypha are taken from Alfred Rahlfs, *Rahlfs' Septuagint, with Apocrypha & Variants*, revised by Robert Hanhart in 2006, exported from BibleWorks & Electronic Edition (Norfolk, VA: BibleWorks, 2013).

Quotations of the Greek New Testament are taken from Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th Revised Edition, edited by

Barbara and Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger in cooperation with the Institute for the New Testament Textual Research, Munster/Westphalia, Germany: printed by Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart, 2012.

I have also used the following Nestle-Aland 27th Edition of the Greek New Testament accessing Logos Bible Software in order to see the number of occurrences of the verb δικαίω: E. Nestle, B. Aland and K. Aland, ed., Greek New Testament, Nestle-Aland 27th Edition (Munster/Westphalia, Germany: American Bible Society, 1986) exported from Logos Bible Software 4, November 30, 2014.

Also, in the commentary on the Epistle of James, I used and referred mostly to the *English Standard Version*.

Introduction

The Epistle of James has taken a diversified path of reception and interpretation, which comprises different stages, from acknowledging it as a part of the New Testament canon up to interpreting it as an epistle with deep theological and moral valences.¹ There are various interpreters on this path who deliberately use a dogmatic lens through which “James appears flatly to contradict Paul’s doctrine of justification by faith.”² Other interpreters, such as Dibelius, appealing to a sceptical hermeneutics related to the availability of the text to let itself be comprehended, have been obliged to overlook a possible continuity, a certain logic and a unifying theme within it. Moreover, the lack of the metacritical reflexion within the interpretative exercise, meant to facilitate the question whether the kind of proper rationality used coincides with the synergistic

¹ Caroline A. J. Skeel, H. J. White, J. P. Whitney, gen. ed., *The Epistle of St. Clement of Rome, Text for Student*, nr. 7 (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1919), 27; Temple Chevallier ed. and trans., *A Translation of the Epistles of Clement of Rome, Polycarp and Ignatius, and of the Apologies of Justin Martyr and Tertulian* (London: Francis & John Rivington, 1851), XVIII; John Keble, trans., *Five Books of S. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, against Heresies* (Oxford: J. Parker, 1872), 343 and 349; Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, ed., *Canon Muratorianus: The Earliest Catalogue of the Books of the New Testament*, Edited with Notes (Oxford: The Clarendon press, 1867), 109; Christian Frederic Crusé, trans., and Isaac Boyle (in historical view.), *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus, Bishop of Cesarea, in Palestine and an Hystorical View of the Council of Nice by Isaac Boyle* (New York: T.N. Stanford, 1856), 78; Philip Schaff ed., *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. IV, *Saint Augustin: The Writings Against the Manicheans and Against the Donatists* (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Company, 1887), vol. IV, 510, 1177 and 1285; Bart D. Ehrman, “The New Testament Canon of Didymus the Blind,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 37, no. 1 (March 1983), pp. 1-21, 6; Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, vol. VIII (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1916), 59 and 619; Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ed., *Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A. D. 325*, vol., XIV (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1867), 219 and 291; William Norton, trans., *A Translation, in English Daily Used, of the Peshito-Syriac Text, and of the Received Greek Text, of Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, and 1 John: With an Introduction on the Peshito-Syriac Text, and the Revised Greek Text of 1881* (London: W.K. Bloom, 1889); Saint Augustine, *Seventeen Short Treatises of S. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo* (Oxford: J.H. Parker, 1847), 57, 59, 66, 134, 258, 271, 341, 344, 372, 377, 552, 570.

² Richard Bauckham, *James* (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), 113 – 114.

rationality of the book, according to which the belief goes hand in hand with the action, has made many interpretations overlook the very synergistic rationality which spans the epistle. Certain authors interpreted the epistle regarding it from the modernist-paradigmatical lens, those of their time, without submitting them to interrogation and analysis, which finally led them to the consideration that James attacks an “intellectual,” non-synergistic faith, separated from deeds. Also, this manner of seeing things determined them to dissociate interpretation from application, letting us understand that the interpretation of the Scripture and the transfer of the principles grasped into the reader’s daily life are two completely different things, lacking an intrinsic connection. Yet, the final purpose of the hermeneutical undertaking is to make the author translate the spiritual principles discovered in the text into a proper way of life.

As a consequence, the general motivation of this thesis is mainly a pastoral one. Its purpose, particularly and programmatically, is to understand the content of the epistle from the perspective of James’ synergism, using a “synergistic” reasoning, in conformity with which thought merges with action, and employs a methodology of interpretation which corroborates the meaning of the text in the sphere of life, so that the understanding of the text will culminate with adopting and mirroring its principles in habits of character as the author of the epistle desires.

For the beginning, in the preamble, I would highlight the fact that the author of the epistle uses the internality-externality type of pairing thirty times in order to ground his discussions about the duplicitous actions of the believers, as these are revealed by the trial of faith (chapter one) and verbal communication (chapter three). Given that James conjures the functional unity of such a pair, in 2:22, talking about the synergy between faith and deeds, the grouping of all the mind-matter pairs can be properly called “synergic pairs.” The existence of these pairs

arouses the author's synergistic thinking and represents the reference point to which the whole interpretative exercise relates.

In the first chapter, I will focus on two key moments from James' scholarship. The first one is the interpretation made by Martin Luther, an interpretation which has two types of approaches, a theological-expeditious one that sees James, passingly, in contradiction with Paul, and the pastoral-contextual one, considerably more expansive than the former, where James is analysed in the light of its correspondence with other texts in the Scripture, and has a predominantly pastoral character. The second important interpretation is that of Martin Dibelius. This is an eminently modern approach based on a form-criticism methodology, which has the merit of emphasizing the antique cultural milieu from 30-50 AD, but taking into account the form-criticism viewpoint, according to which the text is formed out of blocks of texts that have to be grasped separately by appealing to their primary sources, leaves the epistle without continuity and message. The relevance of these interpretations for the present work consists in noticing that James is characterized by a synergistic type of thinking, specifically Jewish, according to which thinking and action are in a complete structural unity.

To complete the image of the interpretations of the Epistle of James, I will pursue the method, the mindset of the book and the understanding of the relationship between the faith and action of a certain number of commentators who come after each other in a relatively broad period of time: 1852 – 2010. Within the review of these commentators, I will notice the following issues: 1. A large number of interpreters argue that we can speak about a logical continuity of the epistle; 2. Some interpreters claim that the apostle Paul and James do not contradict each other; 3. A small number of interpreters, Neander, Fulford and Mayor, allow for synergy between faith and action and interpret the epistle without considering that James somehow refers to an intellectual

faith (a faith separated from works), and 4. A considerable number of interpreters think that James discusses two types of faith, intellectual and practical, or they sometimes see faith and works on different levels of functional importance. Relevant for the track of this paper is the very discordance between the opinions of most of James' interpreters, who consider that James talks in chapter two about the intellectual (theoretical) faith, separated from works, and the author's formal emphasis in 2:22 on the fact that faith and works are in a synergic relationship: "You see that faith was active along with his works" (ESV).

Regarding the trajectory of this paper, we have to mention that an approach to the epistle, which includes the synergistic thinking, highlighted by 2:22 and all the other "synergic pairs," a thinking according to which the internality coalesces with externality, or, more concretely, faith is united with acts, cannot join that trend of interpretations which concedes that the author or his addressees would perceive a faith that is not connected with works, and that would need acts which match it in order to mature. An essential idea to take into consideration is recalled by the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, namely the division of knowledge into theory and practice, and the reservation of a privileged place for reason in its endeavour to accede to meaning, representing several of the paradigmatic traits of modernity. Taking into consideration that modern interpretations split faith into intellectual or dogmatic, and practical faith, can make us consider, very probably, the fact that they are characterized by the modern paradigmatic reflex to separate thinking, as an exponent of the internality, from action, as an exponent of its externality.

In the second chapter, I will display a description of the paradigm of modernity, made by Taylor in *"A Secular Age,"* in order to see in what the modern rationale consists, obviously different from the ancient Hebrew reason and from the one that derives from the "synergic pairs" in

James, where belief goes hand in hand with action. Then, I will note the deficiencies of this rationality, and also at the same time I will look for the adoption of a reason which will suit the synergistic thinking of the author of the epistle. First of all, Taylor notes that western society has demarcated and divided, afterwards, the transcendental source from the immanent order, which has eventually led to the removal of faith from the centre of life. This removal is due, among others, to the nominalist attack upon theological realism, to the peremptory focus of theologians and scientists on the natural order, to the exclusive appeal to concrete reality in order to account for life and cosmos, to the denial of any relationship between Nature and the supernatural, to the acknowledgement of the prevalence of reason and its sphere over the field of action and practice, to the amplification of the tendencies of the instrumentalist individualism and human-centrist aspirations, to the placement of the intellectual domain on a paramount position compared to that of practice, and to the phenomenon called “excarnation,” which involves living Christianity at an intellectual level. All these determinants evoke the modern paradigm characterized, on the one hand, by the prevalence of reason in knowledge, and on the other hand, by the separation of transcendence from immanence. A correction of modern thinking, the philosopher believes, would have to be carried out by bringing reason onto the same level of value with life and by reunifying the immanent order with the transcendental source.

With the purpose of adopting a rationale that places thinking and action on an equal footing, I will resort to the founder of pragmatism, Ch. S. Peirce. Within the critique of Descartes’ rationalism that the American philosopher undertakes, I will pinpoint, step by step, issues that are related to Peirce’s epistemology, semiotics and phenomenology. Peirce upholds several beliefs which have a hefty contribution to this work. First of all, knowledge is based on the junction between thinking and

experience, which places reason and action on the same level of importance. Secondly, there is a continuity between conviction and action, which harmonizes with the synergistic horizon opened by the Epistle of James. Thirdly, closely related to the second point, meaning is contoured in the domain of action and life, which is why there is no borderline between the theoretical and practical rationale. These beliefs conjugate in order to form the pragmatic logic, which will confer to the present interpretative proceeding one of the prerequisites for joining the study of the book to beliefs and action. Lastly, the triune existence of the sign, seen from the phenomenological perspective, shows the fact that the sign, as well as the reason, is inseparable from its materiality, which reiterates both the indivisible unity between thought and materiality and its pragmatic implications. Once Peirce's contribution to the correction of the epistemology of modernity from within has been put forward, I will appeal to Oliver Davies' semiotic cosmology, which confers to the present project the theological orientation capable of rendering the unity between transcendence and immanence. First of all, in Davies, the relationship between theology and science evokes a unity between thinking and action, expressed by the concept of freedom *in actu* of the self. Then, secondly, the cosmological semiotics and the interpretative stage discloses the presence of the transcendental source at the very core of the semiotic event, material and conceptual at the same time, which shows the real coalescence between the transcendent and the immanent order. Therefore, the conjunction between Peirce's semiotics and Davies' cosmological semiotics can offer a rationale according to which theory merges with practice, as Taylor claims, but also a cosmology that narrates the overlap between the transcendent and the immanent. The semiotic way of thinking issued out of the conjunction between the two semiotics, will thus prevent this project from entering the non-synergist path, where an intellectual faith is conceived, and will open a horizon in which the

internality is joined to the externality, being offered equal importance both from the epistemological point of view and from the semiotic one.

Since semiotics, in its endeavour to work out meaning, presupposes the agreement between understanding and action, then the interpretive enterprise of a text, of the Epistle of James, in our case, will not be assigned to a type of study that will ignore the link between the theoretical and the practical. On the contrary, it will adopt a hermeneutical method which will attempt to see what the relevance of the text for action and life in its whole is. Adopting a method of semiotic interpretation of this type will represent the object of work in the third chapter. Focusing on the three phenomenological categories, *firstness*, *secondness* and *thirdness*, and closely pursuing the fundamental prerequisites of semiotics, firstly Peirce's quantitative ones, then the cosmological ones, the interpretation of the sections in James will be carried out in three stages. First and foremost, I will start both from the premise that any text has its degree of vagueness, and from the hope that the degree of vagueness of any sign can be significantly diminished. The means for reducing vagueness lies in approaching the sign under the aspect of its generality, namely elevating singularity (a word or combination of words, etc.) to the level of concept, noun or general idea, so that through the connection with other similar general signs, the former might benefit from an addition of information and, therefore, from new horizons of understanding. The second stage is the *addressive* one, where the text receives an ample and additional meaning by the fact that it is seen as a conveyor of God's voice found at the very core of the semiotic event. The third stage follows the pragmatic-integrative clarification of the text, namely, prepared cognitively by a future-oriented judgment, the reader will assess the text under the aspect of the contribution that it has for the reader on the whole, who desires to reach a certain destination, in a certain manner, at an anticipated moment. The

contribution that the text has to the present moment, and to the future and anticipative aspect of the reader, outlines the final meaning of the text.

Once having adopted the pragmatic-cosmological rationality and having established the stages of integrative semiotics, I will begin the interpretative exercise of the Epistle of James. We will divide the epistle into seven sections and comment on each section alone, without entering into all its details, aiming to understand the peculiar topic of each one. Finally, we will point out that the first sections of James gradually introduce the observation of fidelity towards God, and the accusation of duplicity in the relationship with God, as it looms within the intimate background of the trial of faith (chapter 1:1-27). Then I will emphasize that the author highlights and criticizes the addressees' tendency to tolerate the cohabitation between faith in God and evil deeds or even to refrain from good deeds (2:1-26). I will remark as well that the author brings duplicity within verbal communication into the open (3:1-18), so that in the end he will call his readers to get rid of vacillation by cleansing their hearts of evil thoughts and by earnestly keeping an eye on the nature of their works (4:1-10). As soon as James arrives at calling his recipients to repent and change, in the fourth section, we will notice that the last sections will reiterate the themes of the first sections, but in reverse order, tackling a series of further details. The author's urge to abandon one's duplicitous character by cleansing one's inner self and behaviour at the same time, is understandable if we take into consideration James' repeated call, from the first three sections, to a relationship between the interior and exterior being. The message of the book, therefore, consists in beseeching the readers to eliminate duplicity and draw closer to God, without vacillating indecisively.

In conclusion, I want to show that the general purpose of this research is a pastoral one, namely to help the religious reader to

consistently follow the correspondence between his peculiar behaviour and his confessed faith, which is the correspondence between what he does and what he says. However, since there is no natural unity between words and works, the focus of this enterprise is directed towards the relationship between faith and works. This formal stress is engendered by the not insignificant number of “synergic pairs” found throughout the Epistle of James. Nevertheless, the relationship between faith and deeds is not approached from the viewpoint of the modernist dualism, according to which, faith, as exponential function of the intellect, can prevail over works, or can detach from them completely, thus framing a type of theoretical faith, but from the perspective of a non-dualist, semiotic-transformational approach, where faith is seen as being indivisibly united with works. Thus, this semiotic interpretation features metacritical reflection, responsible for the selectivity of the interpretative approach; and self-reflexive thinking, which follows the relevance of the object of faith upon life in general. Both the metacritical reflexion and the self-reflexive exercise are instruments laid at the disposal of pastoral theology for the sake of carrying out the correspondence between speech and acting.

Preliminary observations

The starting point of this thesis lies in underscoring that the Epistle of James makes reference both to internal mental functions, like faith and wisdom, and to external behavioural acts, like public discrimination, verbal violence or physical aggression (1:6-8; 1:15; 1:18; 1:20; 2:1,4; 2:14; 2:17; 2:18; 2:19; 2:22; 2:26; 3:11; 3:12; 3:13, 3:16; 3:17; 4:1; 4:2, 4:3; 4:8; 4:9; 4:11; 5:5). These references have three features. First of all, the references to internal cognitive states are not isolated from the ones related to external concrete deeds, but they are always carried out in groups so that a reference to the mental sphere is immediately accompanied by a reference to the field of the physical action or the other way round. Secondly, these references recall a structural unity of the mind-body type. This unity is characterized by the author as such in 2:22, where he talks about the faith-works synergy. And thirdly, the references to mind and behaviour can be found in a large number. The Epistle of James is formed of 108 verses. Thirty times, in these verses, the mind-matter relationship is displayed one way or another, being rendered by the direct connection between the interior of the human being, heart or mind, and its exterior, namely actions, works or behaviour. Thus, if we appeal to a mathematical division, almost one out of three verses contains such references. These internality-externality pairs determine us to approach the epistle with a synergic reasoning.

The fact that the author explains the kind of relationship between faith and works in 2:22 as synergic makes us call, by extrapolation, and for an easy general reference, all the pairs of the mind-body type “synergic pairs.” The “synergic pairs” noticed throughout the epistle can be arranged in the table below:

Table 1. Synergic pairs

Nr	Text	Exponent of internality	Exponent of externality	The pair in Greek, in the order it appears in the text
1	1:6-8	Doubt	uncertainty and unsteadiness in deeds	διακρινόμενος - δίψυχος ἀκατάστατος ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς
2	1:15	evil lust	sinful action	ἐπιθυμία - ἁμαρτίαν
3	1:18	Kindness	the action of delivery	βουληθεῖς - ἀπεκύησεν
4	1:20	Anger	the lack of bearing righteousness	ὀργή - δικαιοσύνην θεοῦ οὐ κατεργάζεται
5	2:1,4	evil thoughts	the action of discrimination	προσωπολημψίαις - διαλογισμῶν πονηρῶν
6	2:14	Faith	works	πίστιν - ἔργα
7	2:17	Faith	works	ἡ πίστις - ἔργα
8	2:18	Faith	works	πίστιν - ἔργα
9	2:19	Faith	good work	σὺ πιστεύεις - καλῶς ποιεῖς
10	2:19	Faith	shudder	πιστεύουσιν - φρίσσουν
11	2:22	Faith	works	πίστις - ἔργοις
12	2:22	Faith	works	ἔργων - ἡ πίστις
13	2:26	Spirit	Body	σῶμα - πνεύματος
14	2:26	Faith	works	πίστις - ἔργων
15	3:11	Fountain	sweet water/bitter water	πηγὴ - γλυκὺ καὶ τὸ πικρὸ
16	3:12	Figtree	bearing fruit	συκῇ - ποιῆσαι

17	3:12	Vine	bearing fruit	ἄμπελος - ποιῆσαι ...σῦκα
18	3:12	salt water	yielding	ἀλυκὸν γλυκὺ - ποιῆσαι
19	3:13	wisdom and knowledge	good behaviour	σοφὸς καὶ ἐπιστήμων - τῆς καλῆς ἀνατροφῆς
20	3:13	meekness of wisdom	works	τὰ ἔργα - πραΰτητι σοφίας
21	3: 16	envying and strife	disorder and evil works	ζῆλος καὶ ἐριθεία - ἀκαταστασία καὶ πᾶν φᾶνλον πρᾶγμα
22	3:17	Wisdom	good fruits	ἄνωθεν σοφία - καρπῶν ἀγαθῶν
23	4:1	evil lusts	wars and fights	πόλεμοι ... μάχαι - ἡδονῶν
24	4:2	you desire	you murder	ἐπιθυμεῖτε - φονεύετε
25	4:2	you envy	you fight and quarrel	ζηλοῦτε - μάχεσθε καὶ πολεμεῖτε
26	4:3	the thought of consuming upon one's lusts	the work of asking wrongly	αὐτὸς αἰτεῖσθε - ἐν ταῖς ἡδοναῖς ὑμῶν δαπανήσητε
27	4:8	Hearts	hands	χεῖρας - καρδίας
28	4:9	Affliction	weeping	ταλαιπωρήσατε – κλαύσατε
29	4:11	the internal propensity of being judge (with evil thoughts as in 2:4)	the fact of judging	κρίνεις – κριτής

30	5:5	nourishing the heart	living in pleasures	ἐτρυφήσατε - καρδίας
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The function of the synergic pairs within the epistle is clearer the more we seek to see what their role in the arguments of each section is and, especially, their role in understanding the climactic section of the epistle, 4:1-10. What I want to prove is that the author's calling to self-reflexivity, on the one hand, and to integral cleansing, heart and hands, on the other hand, actions which are placed by the author between two normative coordinates, a spiritual one (which has perfection as purpose, understood as absolute attachment to God), and an eschatological one (which concerns the Lord's coming as judge), cannot be resolved outside the synergism elicited by the pairs mentioned before. The mind-body synergism is the groundwork on which both the author's demand for a life deprived of duplicity, and the imperative call to repentance, from evil thoughts as well as deeds, are built.

Before acceding to James' commentary and observing the role that the synergic pairs have for the progressivity of the epistle, I consider it necessary to elucidate the etymological meaning of the mind-body synergism, so that, afterwards, I will review a number of interpretations of the epistle, pursuing both the methodology which underlies them and the approach of the relationship between cognition and behaviour.

The word 'synergic' is employed by the author in 2:22 as "συνήγει" and has two aspects, one of which is related to translation and the other one to morphology: first of all, συνήγει derives from συνεργέω, which means "to work together," "co-working."³ The translation denotes, therefore, a structural-functional unity of the two

³ Joseph H. Thayer, *A Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 603.

components. Even if there are interpreters of James, such as J. Alec Motyer, who consider that the synergy about which the author speaks in 2:22 is a relationship which actually “never assumes equality of co-working”⁴, nevertheless, a huge number of commentators allege that the synergy refers to inseparability⁵, indivisibility⁶ and intermingling.⁷ Now, since both constituents of this unity cannot exist one without another, being inseparable or indivisible, it means that none of these are more valuable or less important than the other, on the contrary, they have equal and indispensable value. The second aspect, the morphology of the word συνήργει, and more exactly the condition of the verb in the imperfect indicative active, translated by “were working together,” shows a state of continuous cooperation, a perpetual condition, a daily relationship.⁸ Douglas J. Moo articulates the fact that the grammatical form of the verb shows that faith is not only occasionally at work with deeds, but “constantly at work along with his deeds”⁹. Subsequently, the synergy aroused by the author in 2:22 stands for the faith-action unity as well as the functional, continuous character of it.

Thus, not only the synergic unity between faith and action, but also the considerable number of synergic pairs brings the author’s

⁴ J. Alec Motyer, *The Message of James* (Leicester, England: Downers Grove, Ill., IVP Academic, 1985), 113.

⁵ James H. Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1954), 219-220. Douglas J. Moo, *James*, Reprint edition (Nottingham, England: Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2009), 116. Ralph P. Martin, *James* (Waco, Tex.: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 93. Dan G. McCartney, *James*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Baker Academic, 2009), 169.

⁶ James B. Adamson, *The Epistle of James* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1976), 129.

⁷ Scot McKnight, *The Letter of James* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2011), 251-252.

⁸ Harold K. Moulton, ed., *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 388, 390.

⁹ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, The Pillar New testament Commentary, D. A. Carson, general ed. (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans, 2000), 136.

synergistic reasoning to the foreground. So, if the interpreter of the epistle wants the manner and the result of the interpretation of the epistle not to interfere with its spirit, then the author's synergistic thinking determines him/her to adopt a similar synergistic way of seeing the relationship between human reason and action. The general purpose of this paper is to interpret the epistle of James by adopting a "synergistic thinking" similar to the one emanating from the epistle.

Chapter I

James' scholarship: Reformation and modernity

In what follows, I will dwell upon the interpretation of James carried out by Martin Luther and Martin Dibelius, two key moments in James' scholarship, for the sake of distinguishing their method of interpretation, their perspective on the book as well as the way they perceive the faith-action relationship. After analyzing these two important moments within the interpretation of James, I will briefly explore a number of modern interpretations ranging over three centuries, the 19th to the 21st.

1. An evaluation of Martin Luther's pre-modern considerations on James

After Martin Luther's participation at the Diet of Worms in 1521 and after his concealment at the Wartburg Castle by Frederick III of Saxony, the German reformer translated the New Testament from Greek into the language of his people. On the occasion of publishing this translation in 1522, Luther offered some short presentations of New Testament writings, among which there is also a "Preface to the Epistle of St. James and St. Jude." Luther continued to publish new editions of his translation along with reproductions of his initial commentaries on the New Testament. Still, it is worth mentioning that Luther's commentary on

the Epistle of James underwent some light amendments along the series of issuances after 1522.¹⁰

We have to remark that in the preface to the translation of the Epistle of James, Luther makes a few observations regarding the date and the purpose of its writing, expressing clearly and without hesitation at the same time, his skepticism related to the apostolic authority of the epistle, saying: “I do not hold it to be of apostolic authorship”¹¹ As concerns the real authorship of the book, Luther reckons that the letter might be either a compiling of some apostolic teachings reproduced by some of James’ disciples, or a written version of one of the apostle’s sermons.¹² He considers that its title, in fact, makes use of the name of Jesus’ disciple, James, John’s brother, the first disciple martyred by Herod.¹³ However, the presupposition that the author of the epistle makes reference to certain assertions belonging to Peter and Paul, determines Luther to take into consideration that the writing of the Epistle of James cannot be dated so early, on the contrary, it goes “far later than St. Peter or St. Paul.”¹⁴ The purpose for its writing is “to guard against those who depended on faith without going on to works”¹⁵

There are two main reasons why Luther rejects the apostolicity of the epistle. The first one resides in the consideration that the epistle “ascribes justification to works”¹⁶. This, Luther believes, places James in a straight contradiction with Paul who, in Romans 4:3, claims that Abraham

¹⁰ Arthur Skevington Wood, *Captive to the Word: Martin Luther, Doctor of Sacred Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), 155.

¹¹ John Dillenberger, ed., *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings* (Garden City NY: Doubleday & Company, 1961), 35.

¹² Dillenberger, *Martin Luther*, 36.

¹³ Dillenberger, *Martin Luther*, 36.

¹⁴ Dillenberger, *Martin Luther*, 36.

¹⁵ Dillenberger, *Martin Luther*, 36.

¹⁶ Dillenberger, *Martin Luther*, 35.

was justified without works.¹⁷ The second reason lies in the fact that, despite mentioning Jesus Christ, apparently hastily, in the epistle, the letter does not teach anything regarding the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, or his Spirit. This consideration is based on the idea that “It is the office of a true apostle to preach the passion and resurrection and work of Christ, and lay down the true ground for this faith, as Christ himself says in John 15[:27], You shall be my witness.”¹⁸ This conviction is advocated due to the fact that the justification made by God is mediated by sacrifice, Christ’s death and resurrection, and this is central in the writings of the apostle Paul, Peter and John.

The first reason underlies the fundamental principle of salvation only by faith, and the second one is focused on the principle that the Scripture is wholly Christ-centered. Both grounds are fundamentally theological. These two major motives, which have led to the rejection of the apostolicity of the epistle, constitute a hint of the fact that the approach to the epistle is made on predominantly theological bases.

In spite of denying the apostolic authority of the epistle, and characterizing it as an epistle of straw,¹⁹ in the first editions of the New Testament, and despite the fact that Luther expresses reservations about including James among the writers of the true canon of his Bible, nevertheless, the German reformer does not repudiate it *in toto*. On the contrary, he repeatedly attempts to deepen its meaning and mentions it both in his theological or apologetic discourses and his sermons or devotional studies.²⁰ These subsequent commentaries of Luther will

¹⁷ Dillenberger, *Martin Luther*, 35.

¹⁸ Dillenberger, *Martin Luther*, 35.

¹⁹ Martin Luther, *Luther Deutsch, Die Werke Martin Luthers in Neuer Auswahl für die Gegenwart*, ed. Kurt Aland (Germany, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, edition 1990), 42.

²⁰ Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand, A Life of Martin Luther* (New York - Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1950), 331; Henry O’Connor S. J. *Luther’s Own Statements*

emphasize a completely new perspective of understanding the epistle, shedding light both on the faith-works relationship and on the theological correspondence between the Letter of James and certain writings of Paul. We also want to point out that these scattered commentaries of Luther, in speeches or sermons, or in other commentaries on the New Testament books, help us, meaningfully, in the formation of a general image of the way the theologian from Wittenberg understands James. In what follows, I will highlight, in a chronological order, a good part of Luther's commentaries on the Epistle of James, made over 24 years (1521-1545).

Right before publishing the New Testament in German, in a sermon in 1521, based on the teaching in Luke 17:11-19, "The Miracle of cleansing the ten lepers, in which is portrayed the whole Christian life, with all its incidents and sufferings," Luther contributed concretely to the interpretation of James 2:26.²¹ After Luther quotes the entire verse in 2:26, he states as a general principle the idea that "faith is a living, active thing."²² Therefore, it is impossible, Luther asserts, to believe that faith is in man and does not work.²³ Faith, in Luther's opinion, acts together with works. So, the principle of active faith can help the Christian avoid self-deception, to which James makes reference, since, being drawn by this principle, he can evaluate his faith by examining his own works. The self-reflexive action set in train by the very principle of active faith is reflected by Luther, as clearly as possible, in the following paragraph of his sermon:

Concerning His Teaching and Its Results, Taken Exclusively from the Earliest and Best Editions of Luther's German and Latin Works (New York: Benziger, 1885), 21; Dillenberger, *Martin Luther*, 36.

²¹ John Nicholas Lenker, trans., *The Precious and Sacred Writings of Martin Luther*, (Based on the Kaiser Chronological Edition, with References to the Erlangen and Walch Editions) *Luther's Church Postil Gospels Thirteenth to Twenty Sixth Sunday After Trinity*, vol. V (Minneapolis, Minn., Lutherans in all lands co., 1905), 60.

²² Lenker, trans., *Luther's Church Postil*, vol. V, 71.

²³ Lenker, trans., *Luther's Church Postil*, vol. V, 71.

But in order that men may not deceive themselves and think they have faith when they have not, they are to examine their works, whether they also love their neighbours and do good to them. If they do this, it is a sign that they have the true faith. If they do not do this, they only have the sound of faith, and it is with them as the one who sees himself in the glass and when he leaves it and sees himself no more, but sees other things, forgets the face in the glass, as James says in his first chapter, verses 23-24.²⁴

Subsequently, James 2:26 does not show that “righteousness and salvation did not rest on faith, but on works,” Luther explains, but the nature of works denotes the nature of faith. His comments on 2:26 are: “Therefore St. James means to say: Beware, if your life is not in the service of others, and you live for yourself, and care nothing for your neighbour, then your faith is certainly nothing; for it does not do what Christ has done for him. Yea, he does not believe that Christ has done good to him, or he would not omit to do good to his neighbour.”²⁵ In conclusion, James’ phrase “faith without works is dead” indicates the truth that faith which does not act for the benefit of neighbours is a dead faith, a faith anchored in anything but the truth that Christ acted for the benefit of people by giving up his life, out of love, for them. Luther is convinced that what makes a man draw closer to God is faith, whereas the thing that draws him closer to his neighbours is the work done through love. Still, man’s life is not divided in two disconnected parts, out of which one is faith and the other one is love. Luther conceives faith and love (more precisely, active love) as being indestructibly linked to each other. Two decades later, in his introduction from 1545 to the Epistle to the Romans, Luther affirms that “it is impossible to separate works from

²⁴ Lenker, trans., *Luther’s Church Postil*, vol. V, 71-72.

²⁵ Lenker, trans., *Luther’s Church Postil*, vol. V, 71.

faith, quite as impossible as to separate heat and light fires.”²⁶ This is why he states openly in the same sermon that “where faith is right, it also certainly loves, and does to others in love as Christ did to him in faith.”²⁷ Luther’s final conclusion to this sermon, regarding his interpretation of James 2:26, is the following: “St. James means that a Christian life is nothing but faith and love.”²⁸ One can understand from here that the new life, the life of the person with Christ, comprises both faith and action, as faith corresponds to a person and love is the equivalent of works. However, we have to show that Luther does not refer here to the manner in which one can achieve Christian life but to the fact that the Christian life, once achieved “by faith alone,” not by workless faith, is characterized by faith and love, and both of these components belonging to it are equally important. As A. Skevington Wood highlights, “the formula ‘by faith alone’, although it excludes love as the basis of justification, is far from excluding love as the consequence of justification”²⁹ Once man has become a child of God through faith, he cannot refrain from showing the love of his neighbours, in works, because his person, characterized by faith, and his deeds, hallmarked by love, are inseparable. Or, in other words: “They form a single event, a single living reality.”³⁰

Luther represents here the pre-modern mindview according to which mind and body are two sides of the same sphere. It contrasts significantly with the modern dualism in which mind and matter are two separate fields whose rapport betrays the cognitive and spiritual independence of the former from the latter. For Luther, faith does not

²⁶ Martin Luther, *Commentary on Romans*, trans., Theodore Mueller, (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Kregel Publications and Zondervan Publishing House, 1954), xvii.

²⁷ Lenker, trans., *Luther’s Church Postil*, vol. V, 72.

²⁸ Lenker, trans., *Luther’s Church Postil*, vol. V, 72.

²⁹ Wood, *Captive to the Word*, 172-173.

³⁰ Wood, *Captive to the Word*, 160.

exist outside works, and cannot prevail over them. The faith-works relationship is so tight that works do not appear because the person somehow attempts to do them, but they appear because faith, which is a “propellant,” determines them instantly. Otherwise said, a person who does not believe in God cannot do good works with so much freedom, and a person who does not do them reveals, by this very omission, the gap of his faith in God. This is stressed by Luther, toward the end of his life, in the introduction to the Epistle to the Romans, in 1545:

Oh, it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith; and so it is impossible for it not to do good works incessantly. It does not ask whether there are good works to do, but before the question rises; it has already done them, and is always at the doing of them. He who does not these works is a faithless man. He gropes and looks about after faith and good works, and knows neither what faith is nor what good works are, though he talks and talks, with many words, about faith and good works.³¹

In a quite early work, published in 1522, entitled “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” Luther talks about the manner in which his opponents employ the “authority of James the Apostle” in transforming the area of unction for healing the sick into a ritual whose applicability concerns those who are on the deathbed. Luther uses this occasion to underline, without dealing with details, that the number of those who abnegate the apostolic source of the epistle is high.³² In order to argue that the unction to which James refers is not a sacramental commandment, Luther uses both the author’s imperative regarding the prayer accompanied by faith in chapter 5, and the depiction of the prayer fulfilled in 1:6. Luther’s basic critique is that faith is neglected despite the fact that, according to James and his own belief, it can heal sicknesses.³³ It

³¹ Luther, *Commentary on Romans*, xvii.

³² Henry Eyster Jacobs and Adolph Spaeth, ed., *Works of Martin Luther, With Introductions and Notes*, n.d. Volume II (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company, 1916), 285.

³³ Jacobs and Spaeth, ed., *Works of Martin Luther*, vol. II, 289.

is not the prayer as empirical fact, but the very act of praying with faith, which is really valuable.³⁴

In the discourse called “Treatise on good works,” published in 1522, Luther insists on showing that prayer is “a special exercise of faith” and according to James, in 1:6-8, the one who does not trust in God will not receive anything from him.³⁵ In the same work, it is also specified that the act of praying is successful unless it is made with evil thoughts and without faith.³⁶

Furthermore, in the sermon “Concerning them that are under the Law, and them that are under grace,” Luther accuses those who employ the text in James 2:26 to

ascribe all merit and sovereign righteousness to works done before justification, making almost no account of faith, alleging that which James saith, ‘that without works it is dead: which sentence of the apostle, when they little understand, they attribute almost nothing to faith, they always stick to works, whereby they think they do merit exceedingly of God, and are persuaded that for their works’ sake they obtain the favour of God
...³⁷

This commentary, on the one hand, shows quite early that James 2:26 is understood wrongly if it is regarded as a text which endorses the overestimation of deeds to the detriment of faith. On the other hand, implicitly, it stands away from the idea that the author of the epistle (“the apostle” this time) would have deliberately written against Paul and with the aim of underestimating faith.

³⁴ Jacobs and Spaeth, ed., *Works of Martin Luther*, vol. II, 210-211.

³⁵ Henry Eyster Jacobs and Adolph Spaeth, ed., *Works of Martin Luther, With Introductions and Notes*, Volume I (Philadelphia: A.J. Holman company, 1915), 226.

³⁶ Jacobs and Spaeth, ed., *Works of Martin Luther*, vol. I, 226.

³⁷ Martin Luther, *Sermons on the Most Interesting Doctrines of the Gospel* (London: James Duncan, 1830), 245.

In another commentary of 1522, Luther contradicts Madam Huldah for the reason that she “undervalues faith,” granting undeserved prevalence to works over faith. This outlook leads to an erroneous interpretation of an important section in James. He also reaches the point where he associates James’ idea with that of Paul in 1 Cor. 13:2, showing indirectly that James and Paul do not contradict each other but they correspond with each other. He evokes the coherence between the teachings of the two apostles speaking about the connection between faith, which directs us toward God, and the love of neighbours, which is identified with the desirable and vital acts in the relationships among people. Luther says:

This explains the whole matter, not that faith is insufficient to make us pious, but that a Christian life must embrace and never separate these two, faith and love. But the presumptuous undertake to separate them, they want only to believe and not to love, they despise their neighbour, and yet pretend to have Christ. This is false and must fail.³⁸

Thus, the faith that draws us closer to God is inseparable from the love that acts in favour of our neighbour.

In another train of thoughts, in accordance with James 1:18, Luther indicates that, unlike the Son who is born of God and the angels who are only God’s creatures, Christians are both created and born by means of the Word.³⁹

In a sermon published sometime between 1522-1523, Luther comments at length on the bond between faith and works bringing further light on the denotative function of acts. The denotative function of acts guided the reformer to talk about “justification by works” and

³⁸ Lenker, trans., *Luther’s Church Postil*, vol. V., 72-73.

³⁹ John Nicholas Lenker, trans., *Luther’s Epistle Sermons, Advent and Christmas Season*, vol. I (Minneapolis, USA: The Luther Press, 1908), 184.

realize that the latter is nothing else but the external correspondent of “justification by faith.” Luther sets off from the idea that works project the nature of faith into the empirical and objective realm, and their absence points out the existence of a negative and unacceptable faith: “For where works do not follow a man cannot know whether his faith is right; yea, he may be certain that his faith is a dream, and not right as it should be.”⁴⁰ In order to strengthen this perspective on the notifying role of works, Luther makes reference to the example of Abraham, used by James, as such: “Thus Abraham became certain of his faith and that he feared God, When he offered up his son.”⁴¹

If we look at works from the viewpoint in which they reflect, prove or justify the existence of faith, then man, Luther says, can be “justified by works.” Here are his words in their immediate context:

Then abide by the truth, that man is internally, in spirit before God, justified by faith alone without works, but externally and publicly before men and himself, *he is justified by works* [my italics], that he is at heart an honest believer and pious. The one you may call a public or outward justification, the other an inner justification, yet in the sense that the public or external justification is only the fruit, the result and proof of the justification in the heart, that a man does not become just thereby before God, but must previously be just before him.⁴²

Therefore, Luther indicates that a man can know what the nature of his faith is by looking at the nature of his works; and this self-knowledge, carried out on the grounds of observing one’s own actions, is called by the German reformer “justification by works.” In other terms, as the fruit of a tree, “the public and outward good of the tree,” is actually the result and

⁴⁰ John Nicholas Lenker, trans., *The Precious and Sacred Writings of Martin Luther* . . . Based on the Kaiser Chronological Edition, with References to the Erlangen and Walch Editions, *First to Twelfth Sunday After Trinity*, Second Edition, vol., IV, (Minneapolis, Minn., Lutherans in all lands co., 1904), 308.

⁴¹ Lenker, trans., *The Precious and Sacred Writings*, vol. IV, 308.

⁴² Lenker, trans., *The Precious and Sacred Writings*, vol. IV, 308.

proof of “its inner and natural goodness,” likewise man’s outward and public actions are the outcome and evidence of his inner spiritual content.⁴³ Luther insists on underscoring in the same sermon that this is the interpretation that must be given to the verse in James 2:26. The works that can help our neighbor are the fruits which prove the genuineness of faith publicly; and the absence of good works “is a sure sign that there is no faith there: but only an empty thought and dream, which they falsely call faith.”⁴⁴ Luther’s “justification by works” does not imply God’s accepting of somebody due to his works, but it expresses the logical inference to the faith of the man who is already considered righteous. This inference is carried out on the basis of the concrete observation of works and the acknowledgement of the reality of the deep relationship that exists between faith and works. Thus, James does not ascribe justification to works, as Luther initially showed in the preface to the Epistle of James in 1522, but he ascribes to works the function of indicating the nature of their correspondent faith. This interpretation makes it obvious that Luther considers James’ teaching “justification by works” to be correct and sees it as fitting with his own theology of salvation very well.

In another sermon, preached on the “Eleventh Sunday after Trinity,” in 1522, on the repentance of the publican, from the parable in Luke 18:9-14 Luther brings up James again, together with his statement that “faith cannot exist without works,” in order to point out another aspect of the denotative function of works, namely, that works, in their plurality, reveal the nature of faith.⁴⁵ Remembering James, Luther carries out this account saying: “‘A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit.’ And

⁴³ cf. Lenker, trans., *The Precious and Sacred Writings*, vol. IV, 308.

⁴⁴ Lenker, trans., *The Precious and Sacred Writings*, vol. IV, 308.

⁴⁵ Lenker, trans., *The Precious and Sacred Writings*, vol. IV, 337-338.

again, ‘An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit.’”⁴⁶ Aware that judging somebody strictly by appearance can be misleading, Luther brings up Christ’s sentence “by their fruits ye shall know them.” Based on it, Luther argues that the observation of somebody’s behavior must contain “the proper distinction” of a plurality of works.⁴⁷ Only a proper distinction of all works will successfully facilitate the dissemblance between sincerity and hypocrisy. Luther wants to point out again that not only a deed, done by someone at a certain time, is revelatory with respect to what he believes, but also his behavior as a whole and his manner of life is especially authoritative: “No, no; faith is a living and an essential thing, which makes a new creature of man I now see in his changed conduct, manner and life, that he believes. So high and great a thing is faith.”⁴⁸

Among the lines of the same sermon, Luther makes reference to 1 Cor. 4:20, emphasizing indirectly the real concordance between both Luke’s and James’ teaching on the topic of faith-works, and that of Paul:

For this reason the Holy Spirit urges works, that they may be witnesses of faith. In those therefore in whom we cannot realize good works, we can immediately say and conclude: they heard of faith, but it did not sink into good soil. For if you continue in pride and lewdness, in greed and anger, and yet talk much of faith, St. Paul will come and say, 1 Cor. 4:20, look here my dear sir, ‘the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.’ It requires life and action, and is not brought about by mere talk.⁴⁹

Since only good works confess faith in God, then nothing else can take their place away. Empty words cannot replace the absence of acts. Although Luther comments here on a text from Luke, one cannot overlook that he is obviously influenced by the mark of James’ teaching.

⁴⁶ Lenker, trans., *The Precious and Sacred Writings*, vol. IV, 338.

⁴⁷ Lenker, trans., *The Precious and Sacred Writings*, vol. IV, 339.

⁴⁸ Lenker, trans., *The Precious and Sacred Writings*, vol. IV, 341.

⁴⁹ Lenker, trans., *The Precious and Sacred Writings*, vol. IV, 341-342.

Luther speaks in the following terms: “we must walk upon the common path. Faith alone must make us good and save us. But to know whether faith is right and true, you must show it by your works.”⁵⁰ Whereas faith transforms and saves the being, the plurality of works affirms the nature of faith and its orientation.

In the commentaries that follow, Luther makes reference to other texts in the Epistle of James showing by this both his personal interest in the whole text and its spiritual usefulness that he observes. Quoting from James 1:5-6, in the sermon intended for “the Prayer Sunday” in 1525, Luther defines faith as “a firm, undoubting confidence in God’s promise that it is true.”⁵¹ The one who doubts, actually doubts God’s will and grace, “therefore his prayer is nothing and he gropes after God like the blind for the wall.”⁵²

In the commentary on Titus 2:11-15, a sermon delivered at the mass on Christmas night, Luther draws attention that the Christian must flee not only from the temptations which come from outside himself, but also from those whose source is his own wicked pleasure.⁵³ In another sermon, on the text in Matthew 11:2-10, Luther advises his readers to act in conformity with the teaching of the doctrine of pure faith alluding to the text in James 1:22-25, remarking the author’s beautiful writing style.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Lenker, trans., *The Precious and Sacred Writings*, vol. IV, 342.

⁵¹ John Nicholas Lenker, trans., *The Precious and Sacred Writings of Martin Luther . . . Based on the Kaiser Chronological Edition, with References to the Erlangen and Walch Editions*, vol. XII, *Luther’s Church Postil Gospels, Pentecost or Missionary Sermons*, vol. III (Minneapolis, Minn.: Lutherans in all lands co., 1907), 169.

⁵² Lenker, trans., *The Precious and Sacred Writings*, vol., XII, 169.

⁵³ Martin Luther et al., Dr. Martin Luther’s Church-Postil. Sermons on the Epistles: For the Different Sundays and Festivals in the Year (New Market, Va.: New Market Evangelical Lutheran Publishing Company, 1869), 62.

⁵⁴ John Nicholas Lenker, trans., *The Precious and Sacred Writings of Martin Luther . . . Based on the Kaiser Chronological Edition, with References to the Erlangen and Walch Editions*; (Minneapolis, Minn.: Lutherans in all lands co., 1905), vol. X (*Luther’s Church Postil Gospel, Advent, Christmas and Piphany Sermons*, vol. I), 113.

In the sermon on the Christmas Day, speaking about the text in Luke 2:1-14, Luther affirms the possibility of believers to be born again through Christ, and he relies on James 1:18, thus indicating that the purpose of Christ's birth is to facilitate our spiritual birth.⁵⁵

In the Third Sunday before Lent, preaching from 1 Cor. 9:24-27, and talking about those who lack the faith which works in love, the active faith, Luther again makes appeal to James 1:8 in order to reveal the moral nature of these people characterized by a guileful heart and a changing character of their behaviour.⁵⁶ Luther comments on James 1:8 and explains the inconsistent character of these people as follows: "Since they are aimless and inconstant at heart, this will appear likewise as inconstancy in regard to works and doctrines."⁵⁷ Luther does not leave the third chapter of the Epistle of James undiscussed, so, in the sermon on the Second Sunday after Easter, focused on the text in 1 Peter 2:20-25, he quotes from James 3:2 and makes reference to Christ, the only one who never committed any mistake, either in word or in deed. In another sermon, in 2 Peter 2:11-20, Luther explains James' concept in 1:27, "unspotted from the world," by the following words:

you must not cling to temporal things, but be guided by the doctrine of faith in Christ, and await the eternal heavenly inheritance; and in that faith and that hope you are to execute the trust and work committed to you here .
...⁵⁸

On The Fourth Sunday after Easter, Luther preaches from James 1:16 -21 extensively. In the twelve pages of the sermon, Luther spots the fact that the epistle is addressed to all Christians, among whom there are

⁵⁵ Lenker, trans., *The Precious and Sacred Writings*, vol. X, 144.

⁵⁶ John Nicholas Lenker, trans., *Luther's Epistle Sermons, Epiphany, Easter and Pentecost*, (Minneapolis, Minn.: The Luther Press, 1909), vol. II (vol. VIII of Luther's Complete Works), 96.

⁵⁷ Lenker, trans., *The Precious and Sacred Writings*, vol. II, 96.

⁵⁸ Lenker, trans., *The Precious and Sacred Writings*, vol. II, 282.

some people who back away from God and the Gospel due to their angry impatience and evil lust. The trend of the whole text, Luther says, is that of receiving the Word of God with meekness and patience.⁵⁹ Those who receive the Word and fulfill it will be the recipients of two types of blessings: “good gifts” and “perfect gifts,” the former concerns the present life and the latter refers to the life that follows.⁶⁰ The advantage of the resurrection we have through Christ lies in the illumination of the heart and its filling with joy. Luther counsels his audience to look with confidence at the blessings of the future life that anyone can reach if they continue in faith, not allowing themselves to be turned away through wrath and impatience.⁶¹

In 1529, in the work “On war against the Turk,” Luther cites a paragraph from James 5:17 to argue in favour of the importance of the prayer made by the righteous man.⁶² In the commentary on Psalm 4:5, Luther employs James 1:20 to show that one should not nurture the actions that descend from anger.⁶³ Also, in the Fifth Sunday After Trinity, preaching from 1 Peter 3:8-5, Luther condemns any action found under the empire of anger, relying on the text in James 1:20 which shows that man’s anger does not produce God’s righteousness.⁶⁴ This idea and reference to James 1:20 is reiterated by Luther in the sermon on the Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.⁶⁵ Making the difference between the law

⁵⁹ Lenker, trans., *The Precious and Sacred Writings*, vol. II, 290-291.

⁶⁰ Lenker, trans., *The Precious and Sacred Writings*, vol. II, 292.

⁶¹ Lenker, trans., *The Precious and Sacred Writings*, vol. II, 294.

⁶² C. M. Jacobs, *Works of Martin Luther*, volume V (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: A. J. Holman Company and Castle Press, 1931), 285.

⁶³ John Nicholas Lenker, parts retranslated and edited, *Luther’s Commentary on the First Twenty-Two Psalms: Based on Dr. Henry Cole’s Translation from the Original Latin* (Sunbury, Pa.: Lutheran’s in All Lands Co., vol. I, 1903), 174.

⁶⁴ John Nicholas Lenker, trans. “With the Help of Others,” *Luther’s Epistle Sermons, Trinity Sunday to Advent*, vol. III, *Volume IX of Luther’s Complete works*, (Minneapolis, Minn., The Luther’s Press, 1909), 134.

⁶⁵ Lenker, trans., *The Precious and Sacred Writings*, vol. III, 313.

of works which commands and the law of faith which awaits God's command with meekness, Luther refers to James 4:6 in order to remind us that God resists the proud whereas he gives grace to the one who humbles himself with faithfulness.⁶⁶

Commenting, in 1531, on the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians, chapter 5 verse 9, and being interested in showing the reason why he cannot bear to overlook in the slightest any biblical doctrine, Luther makes mention of James 2:10.⁶⁷ According to this quotation from James, Luther concludes that the believers ought to "deny" their inner temptations and mortify their lusts, in the inner forum of their own decisions.⁶⁸ Luther comments on this text from James more extensively in his sermon based on the paragraph in Titus 2:11-15, on Christmas Eve.⁶⁹ In the sermon, "On the Genealogy or Pedigree of Christ," when he talks about the importance of the trial and the necessity of patience, Luther quotes from James 1:2-4.⁷⁰ The same topic is also discussed by the German theologian in the Christmas sermon, showing that the biggest temptation exists in man's interior. This is why Luther cites from James 1:14.⁷¹ That the man who prays without full confidence, led by the changing spirit of doubt, commits a double offence, is shown by Luther in "Of Prayer." The first one is that he works in vain, similarly to the doubtful

⁶⁶ Lenker, trans., *Luther's Commentary on the First Twenty-Two Psalms*, vol. I, 201.

⁶⁷ George Miller, ed., *A Commentarie of Master Doctor Martin Luther upon the Epistle of S. Paul to the Galathians First Collected and Gathered Word by Word out of His Preaching, and Now out of Latine Faithfully Translated into English for the Unlearned . . .*, 1475-1640 (London: Printed by George Miller, dwelling in the Black-Fryers, 1635), 247.

⁶⁸ George Miller, ed., *A Commentarie of Master Doctor Martin Luther*, 247.

⁶⁹ John Nicholas Lenker, trans., *Luther's Epistle Sermons, Advent and Christmas Season*, vol. I, *Volume VII of Luther's Complete Works* (Minneapolis, Minn., The Luther Press, 1908), 121.

⁷⁰ Martin Luther, *Sermons on the Most Interesting Doctrines* (London: James Duncan, Paternoster – Row, 1830), 37.

⁷¹ Lenker, trans., *Luther's Epistle Sermons, Advent and Christmas Season*, vol. I, 121.

man described by James in 1:6-7 - these verses being quoted in full - and the second one is that not receiving the thing asked for, he blames God for his unsteadiness, thus robbing God of his honour.⁷² The very same quotation is used by the German reformer too, both in the sermon “Of Rejoicing in God,” in the one on the “Fourth Sunday in Advent,” in the sermon on the “Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity,” and in the sermon based on the text in Philippians 4:4-7.⁷³

In 1535, talking about the divine judgment which takes place in Cain’s conscience, and by extrapolation, in the conscience of the sinner, Luther makes appeal to James again, this time to the verse in James 2:19, showing that not even devils are an exception from this unavoidable divine, interior and spiritual process.⁷⁴

The German reformer remembers James in another sermon in 1543, quoting from 1:20, in order to argue again in favour of giving up on anger and receiving the Word.⁷⁵

What is clear in Luther’s commentaries made in other writings than the preface to James, from his translation of the New Testament, is that the German reformer reaches some completely different conclusions from the ones in the preface. We have, therefore, the theological-expeditious commentaries, in the sense that Luther reads the epistle through the basic lens of his reforming dogmatic, and the pastoral-

⁷² Martin Luther, *Sermons on the Most Interesting Doctrines of the Gospel*, 142.

⁷³ Martin Luther, *Sermons on the Most Interesting Doctrines of the Gospel*, 240; Lenker, trans., *Luther’s Epistle Sermons, Advent and Christmas Season*, vol. I., 109; Lenker, trans., *Luther’s Church Postil Gospels, Thirteenth to Twenty-Sixth Sunday After Trinity*, vol., V, 65; ***, *A Selection of the Most Celebrated Sermons of Martin Luther, Minister of the Gospel, and Principal Leader in the Protestant Reformation* (New York: S. & D.A. Forbes, 1830), 201.

⁷⁴ John Nicholas Lenker, parts translated and ed., *Luther on the Creation: A Critical and Devotional Commentary on Genesis* (Minneapolis, USA: Lutherans in All Lands CO., vol. I, 1904), 442; Henry Cole, trans., *The Creation: A Commentary on the First Five Chapters of the Book of Genesis* (Edinburgh : T & T Clark, 1858), v and 392.

⁷⁵ Lenker, trans., *The Precious and Sacred Writings*, vol. IV, 192.

contextual ones, where he analyses parts from the epistle of James following their correspondence with other texts in the New Testament. The pastoral-contextual commentaries are made rather on the basis of a contextual exegesis and according to his pastoral motivation of seeing the accomplishment of their teachings in the personal life of believers.

Accordingly, it is also notable that these pastoral-contextual commentaries are not so much motivated theologically, meaning that the exegesis is not explicitly conditioned by the saying “sola fide,” but they rather have, at their foundation, the pastoral motivation to teach his listeners the prescripts of the Scripture. It is also remarkable that the commentaries on James, from the public discourses of the reformer, prove that the Epistle of James does not contradict his theology, and implicitly the Pauline one; on the contrary, it endorses and amplifies them.

As a general conclusion to Luther’s interpretation of the Epistle of James, one can make the following observations. Firstly, Luther’s interest in the epistle is tremendous, and is not reduced to the short preface to the Epistle of James, which was published in 1522, along with the publishing of the New Testament in German. Secondly, Luther’s commentary on the texts in James occurs on the basis of taking into account the proximate context of the book and on the basis of their understanding in the wide biblical context. Thus, Luther brings some texts from James into the light of certain books in the New Testament, such as 1 Corinthians and the Gospel of Luke. It is worth observing, as well, that other texts in the New Testament are interpreted in light of some verses from the Epistle of James. Thirdly, Luther has two kinds of approaching the Epistle of James: the first one is theological and expeditious, and the second one is contextual and pastoral. The temporary character of the theological interpretation of the epistle is given both by the fact that the preface undergoes substantial modifications along the successive editions

after 1522 (for example, the section with the “the straw epistle” appears in the first edition, while the former is cancelled in the following editions of the New Testament), and that it is completed by interpretations of paragraphs and key verses from James, whose meaning, different and innovating compared with the one in the preface, is kept and reiterated by the author. If in the theological-expeditious approach Luther denies the apostolicity of the epistle for the reason that it “ascribes justification to works,” namely that salvation is received by works, in the pastoral-contextual approach, the German reformer rehabilitates his own perspective on James, showing that the author of the epistle uses the phrase “justification by works” to refer to the demonstration of one’s faith and salvation by works. Through the contextual approach of the epistle of James, Luther gets to associate James with Paul, clearly showing that: “When James and Paul say that man is justified by works, they are opposing the false opinion that faith without its works is sufficient, whereas such a faith is not faith at all.”⁷⁶ Grisar Hartmann thinks that this statement might have been made by Luther in 1515 – 1516, in a commentary which was not published at that time on the Epistle to the Romans.⁷⁷ Fourthly, the pastoral approach to the Epistle of James enjoys more room than the brief theological approach of the epistle in the preface to the New Testament, which, despite the fact that it is much more famous in the theological milieu today, is concise and less contextual.

Why, nonetheless, does Luther glide between discrediting the Epistle of James in comparison with other writings in the New Testament on the one hand, and its appreciation on the other hand? And, why does

⁷⁶ Hartmann Grisar, *Luther*, translation from the German by E. M. Lamond, edited by Luigi Cappadelta, vol. I (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, , 1913), 255.

⁷⁷ Hartmann Grisar, *Luther*, translated by E. M. Lamond, edited by Luigi Cappadelta, vol. V (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1916), 522.

Luther notice the consensus between James and Paul in 1515 – 1516, reject James so vehemently in 1522, and again in 1521-1523 remark on the theological agreement between the two writers? All these questions are an enigma that is not the focus of this research. Relevant for the present research, rather, is the fact that Luther notices and offers a large place in his commentaries to James' statement about the inseparable connection between faith and works, accentuating the normative function of faith and the revealing or denotative one of works. In Luther, faith can be inferred from works. It is conspicuous that Luther stands for premodern thinking, according to which the internal world - faith or mind - is not enough in itself nor yet separated from the external one - works or life - unlike the new paradigm that Descartes' rationalism will bring, in conformity with which the intellect needs nothing but itself in the process of knowledge, whereby self-knowledge is fulfilled on the basis of the natural competence of introspection.

2. Martin Dibelius' analysis of the Epistle of James

In the following pages, I will highlight the method used by Dibelius in the interpretation of James more minutely, his notion of the structure of the book and the way he sees the relationship between faith and works as it is recalled by the author of the epistle. The motivation behind analysing Dibelius' approach to the Epistle lies in the fact that it is a reference point, like Luther, in the recent history of James' interpretation. We find references to Dibelius in many of the commentaries after him.

In the introduction to his book, "A Commentary on the Epistle of James," Dibelius asserts, in the very first sentence, that the understanding of a document, in our case the Epistle of James, is determined by the observation of its literary character or genre: "a clear concept of a

document's literary character is necessary in order to understand it as a whole."⁷⁸

Nonetheless, in order to comprehend the typology and the interpretative function of the literary genres, one needs to find out the hermeneutical prerequisites that are at the basis of Dibelius' interpretation.

Being interested in giving a hermeneutical perspective on the meaning of the four Gospels of the New Testament, Dibelius composed his fundamental work entitled *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, published for the first time in 1919, which became known as a prominent research that upholds the hermeneutical paradigm called *form criticism*. The rise of form criticism, R. L. Niswonger explains, came just after the set of source criticism, which "seemed to have gone as far as its proponents could carry it."⁷⁹

The representative methods of *form criticism*, Steven H. Travis indicates, "were first applied systematically to the Gospel by three German scholars – K. L. Schmidt, M. Dibelius and R. Bultmann."⁸⁰ We also have to mention Hermann Gunkel here, the theologian that first began the form-critical commentary on Genesis in 1901, arguing for the plurality of the authors of Genesis.⁸¹

In his study, Dibelius (1883 – 1947) highlights the two prerequisites that underline his interpretation: a) the popular literature of

⁷⁸ Martin Dibelius, *James: A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, trans., Michael A. Williams, ed., Hermant Koester (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 1.

⁷⁹ Richard L. Niswonger, *New Testament History*, 1st edition (Grand Rapids Michigan: Zondervan, 1992), 105.

⁸⁰ Stephen H. Travis, "Form Criticism," in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed., Howard I. Marshall (Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1977, revised 1979), 153.

⁸¹ Marvin Alan Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi, *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), 17.

the oral tradition gives birth to the literary work of the New Testament; and b) the literary work is communicated within one or more literary forms or categories.

Regarding the first premise, Dibelius makes a clear distinction between *proper literature*, characterized especially by the privacy of its conception and the transparency of its origin, and *lower literature*, portrayed by uncertainty “as to the method of [its] publication.”⁸² Some of the New Testament documents do not fulfill the literary criteria of proper literature. Dibelius considers, therefore, that “they should not and cannot be compared with ‘literary’ works”⁸³ such as those of Philo and Josephus. Dibelius begins his assertion underlining that the ancient documents had had an oral form before they assumed a written form. Therefore, the real authors of the lower literature are actually a plurality, while the formal authors of the lower literature are “principally collectors, vehicles of tradition, editors.”⁸⁴ Their role consists “in handing down, grouping, and working over the material which has come to them.”⁸⁵ Unlike the proper literature, “where the individual ability and inclination shape the style, i.e., where the result requires an aesthetic judgement of a personal and creative character”⁸⁶ the lower literature, i.e., the ancient documents, having no individual source, owes its style to popular tradition. Yet, the style of the document that the interpreter needs to observe is not a personal feature, but “a sociological result.”⁸⁷ The style of the document is not dependent on the individual personality of its

⁸² Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, trans., Bertram Lee Woolf, ed., William Barclay (Cambridge, England: James Clarke & Co., 1971, 1982), 2.

⁸³ Dibelius, *Gospel*, 2.

⁸⁴ Dibelius, *Gospel*, 3

⁸⁵ Dibelius, *Gospel*, 3.

⁸⁶ Dibelius, *Gospel*, 7.

⁸⁷ Dibelius, *Gospel*, 7.

“author,” but on the “historical and social stratum”⁸⁸ that mediates its existence. Therefore, the understanding of this popular stratum is of fundamental importance for the researchers of the ancient documents.

Having reached this conclusion, one can say that the interpreter’s main focus would be to observe the literary form of the document, and then to analyse the genre of oral tradition that lies at its base. The reader of the document is invited to the public square of Christian life to see what exactly shapes the document, because as Dibelius affirms: “The ultimate origin of the Form is primitive Christian life itself.”⁸⁹

As soon as we acknowledge the pre-literary settings of the ancient documents, nothing else remains but to step farther on the next stage of the interpreter’s process, which, as the second premise suggests, is concerned with the development of forms or literary genres. As we have said, the literary form of the documents has its pre-existence in the oral tradition, so the interpreter’s endeavour must go much beyond the author’s personality and intention and scan the genres of the tradition that lie behind the document’s form. Dibelius explicitly points out that the literary forms or categories, while they play a central role in form criticism, are not the target of an aesthetic consideration only, but the basic issue that requires a deeper and exhaustive “sociological” investigation. The method of form criticism, Dibelius asserts, “would be completely misjudged if it were regarded as originating in a flirtation with aesthetic standards.”⁹⁰

Because literary categories are not elements with aesthetic functions only, but forms that preserve a literary content together with its traditional legacy, one needs to expound their classification, taking into

⁸⁸ Dibelius, *Gospel*, 7.

⁸⁹ Dibelius, *Gospel*, 8.

⁹⁰ Dibelius, *Gospel*, 7.

account that they lead us to the life-setting that sustains the different segments of the document, where the literary forms or categories play a key role.⁹¹ Dibelius finds five main categories (apart from the passion narrative) that feature the ancient documents. They are: *paradigms, tales (novellen), legends, myths and exhortations*.

The paradigm is a definite literary style, created paradoxally by unliterary men, not determined by any aesthetic ideal, but by the “compulsion of their life”⁹². Unlike paradigms, tales principally express “a certain pleasure in the narrative itself;”⁹³ Their *Sitz im Leben* (life-situations) evoke the fact that the narrators and hearers “were intended to prove the miracle-worker was an epiphany of God, and this was done by the Tale as such apart from inclusion in a sermon.”⁹⁴ The legend is chiefly a religious story whose main focus is to recall “[t]he deeds and experiences of a man, who for his piety and sanctity is honoured by God with a special fate”⁹⁵ Myths are stories that describe “a *particular* relation and action of a god”⁹⁶. The core of the story reveals the supernatural forces, events and persons as they take place in physical time and space.

The exhortation (paraenesis), which has a moral content, is a literary form whose purpose is to instruct and correct the people that are part of a Christian community. R. N. Soulen and R. K. Soulen assert that

⁹¹ Regarding this issue, S. H. Travis explains the following: “Form critics recognize certain forms or categories in the Gospel tradition - such as ‘pronouncement-stories’ and ‘miracle-stories’ – and insist that these distinctive forms are not creation of accident or free invention, but are determined by setting in which they arose and the purpose for which they were used. The technical term for this setting is *Sitz im Leben* (‘life-situation’).” in Travis, “Form Criticism,” 154.

⁹² Dibelius, *Gospel*, 37.

⁹³ Dibelius, *Gospel*, 70

⁹⁴ Dibelius, *Gospel*, 95.

⁹⁵ Dibelius, *Gospel*, 105.

⁹⁶ Dibelius, *Gospel*, xv.

exhortations “denote a text containing a series of admonitions, usually ethical and eclectic in nature and without any reference to concrete situations.”⁹⁷ The presence of exhortations in the life of the early church “shows the Church’s concern for shaping life according to the commands of the Master.”⁹⁸

Now that we have seen the typology of genres, as they were differentiated by Dibelius, we must examine the development of the commentary on James in its three exegetical stages. In his commentary, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, originally published in 1921, one can see Dibelius’ ranking of the three stages in the interpretation process of James: 1. the division into pericopes of the document and the analysis of the literary genres characteristic of each pericope; 2. the exploration of the literary-historical substratum underlying the document mentioned; and 3. the return to the interpretation of the pericope, understanding it from the perspective of popular tradition, if possible. Having approached these three stages, we are now ready to proceed with determining the literary character of a document.

2.1. The analysis of the document

The analysis of the document helps the reader to see the literary character of a certain text segment. A correct observation of a document’s genre leads the reader to avoid confusions regarding the concrete literary content, and this way one can notice whether the text is actually a novel, for example, or a historical account.⁹⁹ The primitive Christian writings, among which the Epistle of James is a part, are not

⁹⁷ Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, Third Edition, Revised & Expanded, 3 edition (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 132.

⁹⁸ Dibelius, *Gospel*, 289.

⁹⁹ Dibelius, *James*, 1.

recognized by the manner of their publication, since nobody knows how they were construed, but by their content, expressed purpose, literary technique and style, all of which are like open doors that facilitate the visit inside the chambers of the document.

The first thing that Dibelius undertakes is the division of the document into its major sections, each section having its own expositions. The major sections of James are divided into Sayings and Treatises. The first group of sayings is forwarded by *the prescript* embraced in 1:1. The sayings to which James first pays attention are those *concerning temptations* 1:2-18, and *a series of sayings about hearing and doing* 1:19-27. The cluster of Treatises, James 2:1-3:12, which is unique in James and represents “the core of the writing, is composed of three expositions, each having the characteristic of a treatise.”¹⁰⁰ These *treatises* develop three main themes: *on Partiality* 2:1-13, *on Faith and Works* 2:14-26, and *on the Tongue* 3:1-12. In the course of these treatises, one can note the isolated saying in 2:13 (interpolation), which obviously differs from treatises which are actually characterized by the style of the diatribe common to writers like Epictetus and Philo.¹⁰¹

The next part of James is framed by different sorts of sayings drawn in “self-contained units” and “isolated sayings” which seem to be without any strong logical connection.¹⁰² Therefore one must call them *groups of sayings* in a very general sense.¹⁰³ The sayings in discussion are divided by Dibelius as follows: *A Group of Sayings Against Contentiousness* 3:13-4:12, *A Group of Sayings Against Wordly-Minded Merchants and Rich People* 4:13-5:6, and *A Series of Sayings on Various Themes* 5:7-20.

¹⁰⁰ Dibelius, *James*, 1.

¹⁰¹ Dibelius, *James*, 1.

¹⁰² Dibelius, *James*, 1.

¹⁰³ Dibelius, *James*, 1.

In the following pages, I intend to expound Dibelius' analysis of the various parts of James with respect to its literary character. In other words, my focus will be to reveal Dibelius' arguments for the designation of James not as a letter but as *paraenesis*. In this sense, I want to start with *the prescript* and continue with the *first group of sayings*, with *the treatises* and then finish with the *last group of sayings*.

Analysis of the literary genre of the *Prescript* and the *first group of sayings*

Being well anchored in the Hellenistical-Oriental culture, Dibelius indicates that the form of a letter is mainly characterized by a clear reference to its addressees even if the mention of the addressees is written in the *Prescript (1:1)*, although "on the other side of the papyrus . . .".¹⁰⁴ His main interest here is to prove that James does not permit "us to identify easily the author himself and to delineate the circle of his readers."¹⁰⁵ If this is true, then James is not actually a letter and it must be included in another literary category. He considers that the vagueness of the address is not a simple escape but a pure intention. In other words: "the vagueness of the address could have been the means by which the author left the origin and nature of the document surrounded with intentional ambiguity."¹⁰⁶ The shibboleth of the analysis is the phrase "the twelve tribes of the Diaspora," because this is the name by which the author identifies his recipients. Who are they? If the author were a Jew, then, Dibelius asserts, "we would take this expression in the strict sense

¹⁰⁴ Dibelius, *James*, 65.

¹⁰⁵ Dibelius, *James*, 65.

¹⁰⁶ Dibelius, *James*, 65.

of the Jews outside Palestine.”¹⁰⁷ But since the document denotes the fact that it has something more than a Jewish belief, it is more probable that James addresses his document to the people who belong to the same faith as his, namely the Christian faith. It would be easy to think of the addressees as being Christian Jews, but since the phrase does not say anything about them, whether Jews or Christians, the interpreter has no basis to “presuppose such things”¹⁰⁸. If the prescript does not precisely reveal its addressees as being Jews, not even Christian Jews, then “we are forced to a metaphorical interpretation, and there is only one which is possible: namely, to consider the designation as a reference to the true Israel, for whom heaven is home and earth is only a foreign country, i.e., a Diaspora – hence, as a reference to Christendom on earth.”¹⁰⁹ If this is the case, in other words if the addressees are not “of Jewish extraction,” and if we have to construe them in a metaphorical way using different pieces of information to build up the puzzle, then we are confronted with a document which does not fulfill the ancient customs of forming a letter. Dibelius reckons that the document does not help us to “delineate the circle of the readers”¹¹⁰. Due to the lack of clarity regarding the addressees, the Epistle of James, as a form, must be included in another literary category.

A series of Sayings Concerning Temptations 1:2-18

The use of the terms “trials”(πειρασμοῖς), “testing” (δοκίμιον) and “being tempted” (πειραζόμενος) shows the author’s effort to establish a

¹⁰⁷ Dibelius, *James*, 66.

¹⁰⁸ Dibelius, *James*, 66.

¹⁰⁹ Dibelius, *James*, 66.

¹¹⁰ Dibelius, *James*, 65.

connection between the sayings, even if in reality there is only a superficial one.

In this major section, the superficiality of the connection between the sayings is expressed especially by the logical incoherence between the meanings of the term “trial” used in 1:2 (πειρασμοῖς) and 1:13 ff (πειραζόμενος).¹¹¹ In conclusion, there is the same term (πειράζω), but a different usage which determines the reader to see two different kinds of sayings.

A similar case is found in 1:2-4 and 1:5, where the link between the two sections consists only in words but not in coherence, Dibelius believes. Even if the first section ends with the three words “lacking in nothing” and verse 5 starts with the two words “lacks wisdom,” this does not convince the interpreter to see both sections as deriving one from another, despite the common word λείπω (I am wanting, I am left behind), since the two sections deal “with a case of a totally different nature”¹¹². The eclecticism of this sections is, Dibelius affirms, one of the features that characterizes ancient exhortations.

Other appearances regarding the lack of logical connection may be seen between verse 8 and 9 in the same chapter. While section 1:2-4 expounds the saying about temptation, then the one that follows, 1:5-8, deals with prayers.

The catchwords, as Dibelius helps us to understand, are not a natural logical connection between the segments of a document, but a formal one: it is a kind of “string of sayings.”¹¹³ He considers that the formal connection of the textual elements in the present document is a piece of evidence of its paraenetic character.

¹¹¹ Dibelius, *James*, 71.

¹¹² Dibelius, *James*, 70.

¹¹³ Dibelius, *James*, 6.

Dibelius concludes that this section of sayings is characterized as having superficial connection,¹¹⁴ “not accidental resumption in 1:12ff”¹¹⁵, “external connective device[s]”¹¹⁶ (catchwords), and in some places (v 5 for example) “no connection at all”¹¹⁷.

A Series about Hearing and Doing, 1:19-27

As regards this section, a series of sayings about hearing and doing as part of the first group, Dibelius notices it to be “far more unified than was the first section.”¹¹⁸ He considers that there is a relative certainty concerning the author’s primary concern due to the fundamental tone set by the *three-part saying* in 1:19b: *quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger*. The next verses seem to be a *triplet* of annexes which only help the development of the section. Concretely, verse 1:20 “seems to be an appendix to the last part of the saying in 1:19b”¹¹⁹, verse 1:26 “is evidently connected with the second part of this ‘triplet’”¹²⁰, while the text segment 1:21-25 “is a supplement to the first part of 1:19b”¹²¹

Dibelius asserts that the author constructed the section by adding and attaching some themes which do not flow easily from the core triplet of the section. He also affirms that there is an obvious attempt, in some manuscripts, to “effect a better adaptation of the saying to the tone of a

¹¹⁴ Dibelius, *James*, 69.

¹¹⁵ Dibelius, *James*, 69.

¹¹⁶ Dibelius, *James*, 70.

¹¹⁷ Dibelius, *James*, 70.

¹¹⁸ Dibelius, *James*, 108.

¹¹⁹ Dibelius, *James*, 108.

¹²⁰ Dibelius, *James*, 108.

¹²¹ Dibelius, *James*, 108.

letter.”¹²² In conclusion, the present section underscores indisputable unified segments, but at the same time, inexact constructions¹²³ and formal (not natural) additions which determine the reader to have only a relative certainty about the author’s primary concern, and raise honest questions related to “his reason for incorporating still other admonitions.”¹²⁴

Analysis of the Treatises

The three treatises, *On Partiality*, *On Faith and Works*, and *On the Tongue*, constitute the core of the entire epistle. Each one of these, as Dibelius remarks, “is introduced by an admonition or (in 2:14) a rhetorical question which contains an admonition.”¹²⁵ These admonitions, in fact, render the whole ethical content of their sections. The fact that the first admonition of each text segment gives the general tone to their own section means all these three text segments (2:1-13, 2:14-26 and 3:1-12) have well expressed themes and closely connected sections.

The Treatise On Partiality, 2:1-13

This section starts “in a monitory and reproof tone”¹²⁶ The introductory admonitions warn against the association of the faith in the glorious Jesus Christ with the sin of partiality. It is easily observable that

¹²² Dibelius, *James*, 120.

¹²³ Dibelius, *James*, 121.

¹²⁴ Dibelius, *James*, 108.

¹²⁵ Dibelius, *James*, 124.

¹²⁶ Dibelius, *James*, 125.

from verse 5 on the style seems to change, being “less of a diatribe and more of a sermon.”¹²⁷ Throughout the sermonic exposition that characterizes verses 5-12, one can find rhetorical questions (vv. 5-7) followed by a persuasive ethical-didactic discourse.¹²⁸ The whole section seems to be a well-linked text, with the exception of verse 13 which is independent from the preceding segment of the text.¹²⁹ Dibelius’ explanation is based both on the different meanings pertaining to the term “judgment” in vv. 12 and 13, and on the “compact form” which reveals the back and forth puzzling movements from judgment to mercy.¹³⁰

This section, according to Dibelius, is characterized by a desirable unity in which the diatribe and sermonic style prevail, but it does not totally step aside from the puzzling addition of sayings by means of catchword connections.

A Treatise on Faith and Works, 2:14-26

Dibelius begins the analysis of this section underlining the lack of connection between the present section and the previous one. He reminds us that 2:13 is a simply isolated saying, which does not have any connection with either the previous or the subsequent sections. He then directs our attention, on the one hand, to the stylistic character of this section, which is represented by the relationship between faith and works as it is introduced by the rhetorical question raised by verse 14, and, on the other hand, to the difficulty of the passage in 2:18.

¹²⁷ Dibelius, James, 125.

¹²⁸ Dibelius, James, 125.

¹²⁹ Dibelius, James, 125.

¹³⁰ Dibelius, *James*, 147-148.

Even though Dibelius focuses on the whole section in 2:14-26, I will analyse succinctly several verses (17, 18) which deal with the faith-works relationship. In the section reserved both for the exploration of the literary-historical substratum of the epistle and for its interpretation made by Dibelius, I will also present his observation regarding the faith-works relationship evoked by James.

As concerns the faith-works relationship, Dibelius thinks that the author's introductory rhetorical question is continued with v 17 where the "first train of thought in this section is rounded off."¹³¹ Verse 18 is the platform from which "the second train of thought" starts in order to study the faith-works matter thoroughly, employing "the form of a fictitious discussion which is common in diatribe."¹³² But even here in verse 18 the difficulty is revealed. Verse 18 is reckoned by Dibelius to be "one of the most difficult New Testament passages in general."¹³³ He explicitly says that the "characteristic of the difficulty of the passage is the fact that the point at which the objection of the opponent ends and the answer of the author begins can be disputed."¹³⁴

A Treatise on the Tongue, 3:1-12

At the beginning of the present analysis, Dibelius shows the section as having no indication "of a connection between this section and the preceding treatise"¹³⁵ The whole treatise that focuses on the theme of tongue underlines the negative effect of the tongue upon the

¹³¹ Dibelius, *James*, 149.

¹³² Dibelius, *James*, 149.

¹³³ Dibelius, *James*, 154.

¹³⁴ Dibelius, *James*, 150.

¹³⁵ Dibelius, *James*, 181.

sphere of human inter-relations. This emphasis begins especially with v 5 and uses a number of metaphors that are designed to illustrate and examine the issue under discussion. The verses from 5-12 use a sum of metaphors like horse and ship, spring and plants that highlight the author's effort to arrange them under the main theme. James adopts the metaphorical material from the oral tradition, but "*he has not entirely reworked it to conform to his own intention.*"¹³⁶ Therefore, understanding the metaphors does not guarantee the comprehension of the text segments to which they belong. An illustrative case is v 6 which "in its present form is among the most controversial in the New Testament."¹³⁷

Analysis of the Second Group of Sayings

Dibelius ascertains the lack of indications regarding the internal coherence of the second major group of sayings. For example: "There is [3:13-4:12] no indication of a connection with the preceding section, and the Interpretation will reveal that there is no connection in thought either."¹³⁸ As concerns 4:13-16, he says that it "is unquestionably an independent section."¹³⁹

A group of Sayings Against Contentiousness, 3:13-4:12

Once again Dibelius remarks on the existence of formal connections by means of catchwords like 'bitter' in 3:11 and 'bitter' in

¹³⁶ Dibelius, *James*, 191.

¹³⁷ Dibelius, *James*, 193.

¹³⁸ Dibelius, *James*, 207.

¹³⁹ Dibelius, *James*, 230.

3:14, which actually link verses by virtue of the memory only, being far away from any possibility of guaranteeing “a unity in the train of thought” or a unity of form.¹⁴⁰ As regards the section 3:13-17, Dibelius sees its form as “completely unified,” and the theme well built on the idea of peace.¹⁴¹ The surprising reference to the “fruit of righteousness,” made by James in v 18, instead of the “fruit of wisdom,” as Dibelius discloses, is inexplicable, since the nearby context does not speak at all about righteousness. The admonition in 4:1-6 is alike in tone with the preceding one but is different in content.¹⁴² Here the thought has shifted and the mood has changed.¹⁴³ Even if v. 7a “fits well with what precedes” still, the following admonitions have a totally different content.¹⁴⁴ He considers that James regroups “a series of admonitions which are alike in form but different in content, as we often encounter in paraenesis (cf. Rom 12:9-13). The author has taken these over and perhaps altered them.”¹⁴⁵ We thus have two admonitions (3:13-17 and 4:1-6) pervaded by an isolated saying (3:18) and followed by a series of imperatives (4:7-12).¹⁴⁶

A Group of Sayings Against Worldly-Minded Merchants and Rich People, 4:13-5:6

The text segment that speaks prophetically about the persons that are planning their future unwisely is, according to Dibelius, without

¹⁴⁰ Dibelius, *James*, 207-208.

¹⁴¹ Dibelius, *James*, 208.

¹⁴² Dibelius, *James*, 208.

¹⁴³ Dibelius, *James*, 208.

¹⁴⁴ Dibelius, *James*, 208.

¹⁴⁵ Dibelius, *James*, 208.

¹⁴⁶ Dibelius, *James*, 208.

connection to the preceding series of imperatives.¹⁴⁷ The two related texts, 4:13-16 and 5:1-6, are joined consciously together, as is shown by the same beginning “come now” in both 4:13 and 5:1.¹⁴⁸ The identity of their beginning gives the impression of unity but their thoughts are merely parallel.¹⁴⁹ Dibelius sees that the flow of thoughts in 5:1-6 is blocked by artificiality and lack of clarity, which actually indicates that it belongs to the traditional paraenesis.¹⁵⁰ 4:17, which expresses the sin of omission, is given an important emphasis by Dibelius. Since the context exposes the discussion about evil deeds and transgressions, 4:17 underlines the general assertion of the failure to do good, and seems to be, as Dibelius notes, “loosely inserted into the context”¹⁵¹ Dibelius makes it obvious that “[w]hatever the reason for this saying having been placed here, one thing is certain: it stands isolated between two related texts.”¹⁵²

A Series of Sayings on Various themes 5:7-20

Dibelius divides the last series of sayings, taking into account the content of its sections, as follows: 5:7-11, 13-20 and 5:12. Verse 12, which deals with the restriction of swearing, is considered by Dibelius as standing in the middle of the text “as a totally isolated saying”¹⁵³ Moreover, the German theologian considers that there are a number of precepts that cannot be brought under any preceding theme. They are:

¹⁴⁷ Dibelius, *James*, 230.

¹⁴⁸ Dibelius, *James*, 230.

¹⁴⁹ Dibelius, *James*, 230.

¹⁵⁰ Dibelius, *James*, 231.

¹⁵¹ Dibelius, *James*, 231.

¹⁵² Dibelius, *James*, 231.

¹⁵³ Dibelius, *James*, 241.

5:7, 8, 10 and 11. All these sayings grow from a common ground: patience. But in the midst of their ranking, v 9, which talks about the warning not to “grumble against one another,” “disrupts the continuity, since it has scarcely any material connection with the admonition to patience.”¹⁵⁴ The only thing that probably helps the addition of verse 9 to 7 and 8, whose unity is actually well underlined by Dibelius, is the eschatological motivation regarding the Lord’s coming. Drawing a conclusion to his analysis of this section, Dibelius shows that:

Since 5:7, 8, 9 already constituted a unit, and since the phrase ‘above all’ (πρὸ πάντων) in 5:12 perhaps appears to mark a new paragraph, the expansion would be inserted only after v 9. Such a procedure is not without example in the history of paraenesis.¹⁵⁵

The next verses 5:13-20 can be divided, as Dibelius thinks, in three main sections. Verses 13-15, that deal with *various life situations*, are characterized not by a conditional clause (“If someone is . . . then let him . . .”), but, as he points out, by an independent sentence (“Someone is . . . Let him . . .”) that exposes the form of “the dialogical feature of diatribe.”¹⁵⁶ Verses 16-18 expound the subject of prayer. Dibelius considers that there is no natural connection between these two text segments, in fact the best way of looking at them is to admit that “Jas has tied together two originally heterogeneous sayings by means of the phrase ‘so that you might be healed’ (ὅπως ἰαθῇτε) . . .”¹⁵⁷

In the final section, Dibelius observes without difficulty that, despite the main topic on the sins of the brother, there is no connection between verses 19 and 20 except a formal association which “can be found in the occurrence of the words ‘sin’ and ‘sinner’ (ἁμαρτία –

¹⁵⁴ Dibelius, *James*, 242.

¹⁵⁵ Dibelius, *James*, 242.

¹⁵⁶ Dibelius, *James*, 252.

¹⁵⁷ Dibelius, *James*, 255.

ἀμαρτωλός). This is a purely external connection by means of catchwords, and it has nothing to do with any connection in thought.”¹⁵⁸

Dibelius’ Conclusion to Analysis – *the Epistle of James as Paraenesis*

The schema of the argument on which I am going to found the present conclusion, as it appears in the work of the German theologian, is threefold: 1. There are four main features of paraenesis, 2. These features are found again in the Epistle of James, 3. Therefore, “we may designate the ‘letter’ of James as paraenesis.”¹⁵⁹

Paraenesis, Dibelius affirms, is “a text which strings together admonitions of general ethical content.”¹⁶⁰ The features that give the character of this literary genre are: 1) the lack of a clear line of thought, a “pervasive eclecticism”; 2) the lack of continuity (the lack of logical elements of connection; instead of these there are formal connections called *catchwords*); 3) the lack of design; and 4) the lack of addressing to a single audience.

Because James is characterized by pervasive eclecticism, the development of any religious line of thought is not made possible; as a consequence of this, one cannot hold that James has an elaborated thought.¹⁶¹ The lack of continuity, as an essential mark of paranenesis, can be easily found in books like Tobit, Pseudo-Isocrates, Ad Demonium, in the paraenetical sections of Paul’s letters. James does not make any

¹⁵⁸ Dibelius, *James*, 242.

¹⁵⁹ Dibelius, *James*, 3.

¹⁶⁰ Dibelius, *James*, 3.

¹⁶¹ Dibelius, *James*, 5.

exception from these.¹⁶² As James M Starr and Troels Engberg-Pedersen indicate with acuity, Dibelius, “the father of modern paraenesis studies, treated the same passages from Pre-Isocrates and Seneca as the basis for his definition of paraenesis as epitomized exhortations directed to a specific audience that recognized them as traditional.”¹⁶³ The lack of design, in other words “*the repetition of identical motifs in different places within a writing*”¹⁶⁴ is another feature of paraenetic literature. The repetition in discussion is found in different places both in Tob. 4 and Romans. The arrangement faces serious obstacles, therefore it is not possible to arrange the material according to thought. Sometimes the author has to choose between giving importance to arrangement or content. What is observable is that the author decides, almost every time, to sacrifice the arrangement for the sake of the sum of ethical sayings or thoughts he wishes to present. The main actor that plays an important role in the lack of the document’s design is the conditioning nature of tradition itself.¹⁶⁵ Given the fact that the author does not create the ethical content of the document by himself, but he arranges a sum of pre-existing ethical principles in an artificial rank of sayings and thoughts, he is absolved from the guilt of eclectic style and “he should not be accused of ‘parading the fruits of his studies.’ For this eclecticism is an inherent aspect of paraenesis.”¹⁶⁶

Finally, the Epistle of James, as Dibelius indicates in another place, does not indicate an epistolary situation. The epistle does not reveal the circumstances to the addressees or the pressing needs according to which

¹⁶² Dibelius, *James*, 5.

¹⁶³ James M. Starr and Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Early Christian Paraenesis in Context* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 118.

¹⁶⁴ Dibelius, *James*, 11.

¹⁶⁵ Dibelius, *James*, 5.

¹⁶⁶ Dibelius, *James*, 5.

the author would have been determined to write the document. Also, Dibelius remarks that “there is no news, no message, no greetings.”¹⁶⁷ Therefore, one cannot call it an actual letter.

Dibelius shows that the Epistle of James is characterized by all these features, therefore he concludes that James is a paraenesis.¹⁶⁸

2.2. Exploration of the literary-historical substratum which underlies the paraenetic nature of the Epistle of James and its interpretation

In the following pages, I will survey both the literary–historical basis pointed out by Dibelius and some interpretative notes made by him, thus covering stage two as well as three of his endeavour to interpret the epistle.

Owing to the fact that “by classifying Jas as paraenesis, the letter becomes part of a long and significant history”¹⁶⁹, Dibelius moves on in his approach by offering the necessary importance to the Jewish, Greek and Roman historical-literary background of the material, aiming to return to the document in order to interpret it in light of the trajectory of thought and practice of the ancient world to which it belongs.

At this point, we must underscore that the search for the parallel between a concept in a document and its correspondent in the oral tradition must be undertaken carefully, since there is a danger of an “unwarranted exactitude” especially in the paraenetic literature.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Dibelius, *James*, 2.

¹⁶⁸ Dibelius, *James*, 3.

¹⁶⁹ Dibelius, *James*, 3.

¹⁷⁰ Dibelius, *James*, 25.

Because Dibelius does not see any well-developed theological assertions in James, he focuses his interpretation on the ethical sayings of the document, seeing James as an ethical material that owes its content to the Hellenistic and Jewish cultural environment, “[f]or the early Christian paraenesis is not conceivable outside the larger context of Greek and Jewish paraenetical traditions.”¹⁷¹

Viewing James as an ethical material, Dibelius values it as an important tool with which one can explore at least a part of the variety of ethical principles of Christianity and he also brings its contribution to the development of Christian ethics in general. As regards the background of James’ ethics, Dibelius remarks that he “used the LXX as his Bible”¹⁷² and he could be acquainted with books like The Book of Sirach, or Wisdom of Solomon, and the Test. XII, but it is hard to find a document that could be regarded as a religious source for a certain text segment in James. Undoubtedly, there are Christian and Jewish writers that had a considerable role in providing, indirectly, the ethical material to James.¹⁷³

A kinship between James and Jesus, Dibelius underlines, can be observed in three different ways: 1) both Jesus and James collect their material externally, through the intermediation of catchwords; 2) both authors use the same kind of metaphors and language of addressing the admonitions; and 3) both share the same general ethical rigorism. However, even if James shares the same ethical principle with Jesus, one cannot prove that James has used one of four Gospels. Therefore, one can only assume that, in some particular cases, “Jas is familiar with the Jesus-tradition.”¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Dibelius, *James*, 3.

¹⁷² Dibelius, *James*, 27.

¹⁷³ Dibelius, *James*, 27-28.

¹⁷⁴ Dibelius, *James*, 29.

An element that should draw our attention is the relationship between James and the Shepherd of Hermas. This is because some “[e]xtensive and coherent discussions in *Hermas* could be placed alongside isolated admonitions in Jas and could serve as a commentary on the latter.”¹⁷⁵ It is obvious in Dibelius’ interpretation that certain ancient documents might illuminate the meaning and value of individual textual units in James. Yet, the warning against the “unwarranted exactitude” still remains.¹⁷⁶ The obvious kinship between Hermas and James does not indicate that James is dependent upon Hermas, or that Hermas is dependent upon James - there is not enough proof - but instead, both writings seem to have the same historical-literary source that they adopt and spread forth.

Dibelius notes a real proximity between certain Jewish literature and James. He accredits Spitta and Massebieau’s observation that an unbiased interpreter would recognize a lack of Christian references in some passages. An illustrious example consists in the fact that the only models raised on the pedestal of virtue in James are Abraham, Rahab, Job and Elijah, while “a reference to the suffering of Jesus cannot even be gleaned from 5:11.”¹⁷⁷ We seek in vain, continues the German theologian, “for traces of a Christ-cult, of preaching about the cross and the resurrection, indeed, of any relatively enthusiastic emphasis of particularly Christian sentiments. Jas seems to lie completely in line with pre-Christian Jewish literature.”¹⁷⁸ Because of this consideration, there were interpreters of James that assume a deep connection between James and Jewish literature.

¹⁷⁵ Dibelius, *James*, 31.

¹⁷⁶ Dibelius, *James*, 25.

¹⁷⁷ Dibelius, *James*, 22.

¹⁷⁸ Dibelius, *James*, 22.

Concerning Dibelius' interpretation, one can remark the following things: in the first series of sayings (1:2-18), constituted without a certain logic, James speaks about trials, which are instruments for testing the faith and the cause of endurance.¹⁷⁹ Then, he shows that endurance must be left to produce its perfect fruit in man because only thus can the believer achieve moral integrity.¹⁸⁰ The person who lacks certainty also lacks inner stability in his/her conduct.¹⁸¹ The faithful poor people are welcomed with a mood of consolation, being assured of a glorious future.¹⁸² The heroism characterized by endurance is not a feature of only a few "isolated individuals, but rather it is the self-evident consequence of faith. . . ."¹⁸³ As regards the recalling of God's character, Dibelius understands that "God gives only good things and not evil things"¹⁸⁴ God does not do evil to anyone, on the contrary, he provides salvation.¹⁸⁵ Furthermore, the concept of "rebirth" in James 1:18 "cannot be understood as a testimony of a mystic"¹⁸⁶ This term, however, cannot be either grasped as having an exclusively Jewish origin, it can be "understood only in terms of the milieu of a Christian faith and life."¹⁸⁷

In the second series of sayings (1:19-27), about hearing and doing, one can notice the following accents: the phrase "the perfect law of freedom" has to be regarded in the Jewish and Greek context, and understood as being free of all blemish;¹⁸⁸ and the imperative "be doers

¹⁷⁹ Dibelius, *James*, 70.

¹⁸⁰ Dibelius, *James*, 71.

¹⁸¹ Dibelius, *James*, 80.

¹⁸² Dibelius, *James*, 84.

¹⁸³ Dibelius, *James*, 90.

¹⁸⁴ Dibelius, *James*, 99.

¹⁸⁵ Dibelius, *James*, 103.

¹⁸⁶ Dibelius, *James*, 106.

¹⁸⁷ Dibelius, *James*, 106.

¹⁸⁸ Dibelius, *James*, 116.

of the word” makes us think of the confirmation of the faith in the public demeanor of “brotherly love and moral purity”¹⁸⁹

Regarding “A Treatise on Partiality” (2:1-13), Dibelius regards James as warning his addressees against mixing faith with the defiling act of partiality.¹⁹⁰ In “A Treatise on Faith and Works” (2:14-26), he thinks that James is not so much interested in defining faith as he is in attacking the claim of possessing a faith which excludes works.¹⁹¹

Referring to justification by works, not only by faith, Dibelius believes that the author’s thesis “is that Abraham was approved by God, as righteous as a result of his action, and that therefore the famous faith of Abraham had to be considered as only one factor along with works.”¹⁹² In interpreting the faith-works connection, Dibelius makes reference to the Jewish culture that existed before James, where faith itself is seen as “a work or a pattern of living which included works.”¹⁹³ James considers faith and works on the grounds of the Hebrew tradition where faith and works go hand in hand. Faith is an act and beside it, the other acts prove faith or righteousness.¹⁹⁴ Dibelius allows no room for the concept of faith-without-works in James’ thinking. James is seen to be only in the position where he discloses how artificial the idea of separating faith from works is.¹⁹⁵ The difference between James and the Jewish tradition is not deep, but one which concerns the accent. James distinguishes faith from works without breaking one from another, while the tradition of the synagogue

¹⁸⁹ Dibelius, *James*, 122.

¹⁹⁰ Dibelius, *James*, 126.

¹⁹¹ Dibelius, *James*, 168.

¹⁹² Dibelius, *James*, 164.

¹⁹³ Dibelius, *James*, 165.

¹⁹⁴ Dibelius, *James*, 172, 178.

¹⁹⁵ Dibelius, *James*, 178.

merges faith with works without differentiating them.¹⁹⁶ Both James and the Torah, however, stress the constitutive connection between faith and works.¹⁹⁷ James is not interested in analyzing any type of faith, for his intention is not “dogmatically oriented”; he only “*wishes to admonish the Christians to practice their faith, i.e., their Christianity, by works.*”¹⁹⁸ Dibelius’ outlook on the fact that faith includes action corresponds to a great extent to the semiotic perspective of this paper, as I am going to show in the last chapter of my thesis.

In “A Treatise on the Tongue” (3:1-12), James deals with those who want to become teachers unfoundedly. The metaphors in 3:3, 4, 7 are borrowed.¹⁹⁹ They uphold the idea that “the effect of the tongue ... extends throughout the whole body.”²⁰⁰ The following metaphors, 3:11, 12, shape the incompatibility between the act of blessing somebody and that of cursing.²⁰¹

In “A Group of Sayings Against Contentiousness” (3:13-4:12), James brings several arguments against contentiousness “using the concept of wisdom.”²⁰² In “A Group of Sayings Against Worldly-Minded Merchants and Rich People,” the section in 4:13-5:6 is characterized by a prophetic way of addressing.²⁰³ Especially in the passage 5:1-6, one can notice the accusations with ancient echoes of blaming the rich ones, probably the rich enemies of Christianity.²⁰⁴ In “A Series of Sayings on

¹⁹⁶ Dibelius, *James*, 170, 172.

¹⁹⁷ Dibelius, *James*, 177, 178.

¹⁹⁸ Dibelius, *James*, 178.

¹⁹⁹ Dibelius, *James*, 189.

²⁰⁰ Dibelius, *James*, 195.

²⁰¹ Dibelius, *James*, 203.

²⁰² Dibelius, *James*, 208.

²⁰³ Dibelius, *James*, 231.

²⁰⁴ Dibelius, *James*, 240.

Various Themes" (5:7-20), James asks his recipients to await the moment of Lord's coming patiently, because their humble condition will be then changed into a glorious one.²⁰⁵

Regarding the structure of the epistle, Dibelius considers that the latter is an elliptical composition, deprived of logical continuity and dogmatic content. Dibelius considers that James takes the stories already segmented in literary forms and builds the edifice of his document with these blocks. Given that the author of the epistle worries more about the contents of the ethical teachings collected and less about their aesthetic or logical arrangement, the epistle lacks a unique line of thought, logical continuity and design.

The different uses of the stories give birth to different literary forms or genres that circulate in the medium of a certain tradition. In order to know how a particular story of a certain document is used in a certain tradition, we are determined to excavate its life-situation (*Sitz im Leben*). It is impossible, according to Dibelius, to make the interpretation horizontally, reading the text in its context, but only vertically, reading the text while seeking for life-situations in its content.

As concerns the relationship between faith and works, Dibelius, like Luther, in fact, dwells upon the connection between James and Jewish literature, indicating both the general similarities and peculiar differences. Thus, Dibelius thinks that James sees the association between faith and works as an indivisible natural link, but that he does not go as far as the Jewish literature to state that faith is an act in itself by virtue of its functionality. Dibelius is convinced that James' aim is to help addressees to practice what they say, and he backs up this belief without falling into the extreme of considering works as external accessories attachable to faith, because the exercise of faith implies action in an unstoppable and

²⁰⁵ Dibelius, *James*, 242.

undeniable way. Dibelius' perspective fits well with the non-dualistic view on the faith-works relationship proper to this semiotic approach.

2.3. Critiques and appreciations

Regarding Dibelius' method of interpretation, one can make the following two general critiques, one concerning the reference to the manner of text formation, and the other one related to the historical-literary way of rendering meaning.

As concerns the manner of text formation, I consider that the main problem that Dibelius faces is that he views the document as being chiefly formed by collection not by creation: the text is seen as being formed out of totally different literary 'blocks' (literary genres or forms) of text which, in consequence, make the study of a particular paragraph in its near context impossible. In case of interpreting James, the text has edges in itself that put an end to the contextual inquiry. Stanley E. Porter, making a comparison between Dibelius' and Davids' approaches to James, underlines the same idea:

Dibelius, on the other hand, reads James 5:7-20, for the most part, in isolation from the rest of the work. Thus for Davids the dynamic of broader literary context plays a vital role, while for Dibelius, broader contextual concerns are practically nonexistent.²⁰⁶

The fact that careful analysis confirms a certain order in the succession of ideas in the Epistle (as we will show later) makes us believe that Dibelius was rash to assert that James sacrificed the form for the sake of content and there is no logical continuity.

²⁰⁶ Stanley E. Porter, *A Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament* (Leiden, The Netherlands: BRILL, 1997), 594.

A different problem that concerns the historical-literary way of rendering meaning is tributary to the optics according to which the text, which entails that particular story, is seen as a fixed content that is born out of a volatile source that dissolves itself in the course of history. Consequently, it is hard to affirm with certainty the life-situation of a particular story or concept. The fact that Dibelius anchors the ancient document on the life-situation, and the life-situation is not always and wholly comprehended, makes the exegetical endeavour highly tentative, and confronts the reader with an uncomfortable and often unfruitful conjecture. As a consequence of it, the reader is often faced with the paradox of reading a text but not having its whole meaning with certitude. On the other hand, the appeal to religious-historical parallels can be a risky endeavour since, as Travis says, “the concern to draw parallels with extra-biblical material can sometimes distort rather than help exegesis.”²⁰⁷

One of the great merits of Dibelius, as Travis remarks, is that he has helped us to “penetrate into the ‘tunnel period’ between A.D. 30 and 50, before any of our New Testament documents were written down.”²⁰⁸ Travis continues to underline the valuable role of searching for the life-situation. He also shows that form criticism has helped us understand that the stories and sayings are preserved not because of any antiquarian interests but because “they were *useful* for worship.”²⁰⁹ And the last merit he underlines is that taking into account the literary forms is very important for an accurate interpretation.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ Travis, “Form Criticism,” 160.

²⁰⁸ Travis, “Form Criticism,” 160.

²⁰⁹ Travis, “Form Criticism,” 161.

²¹⁰ Travis, “Form Criticism,” 161.

3. A succinct review of some modern interpretations of James

We have seen that both Luther and Dibelius interpret the Epistle of James as a collection of ethical teachings. In Luther's case, James intends to show how someone who really believes in Christ should live, by displaying the indestructible connection between faith and action, whereas in Dibelius the goal of the epistle is an eminently ethical one. Concerning the structure of the epistle, in Luther, in accordance with the pastoral-contextual approach, the epistle takes place coherently, and its teachings correspond theologically to Paul's other writings. In Dibelius the constitution of the epistle is carried out so that the organization of the teachings in writing will not bias their contents. But both Luther and Dibelius understand that faith and works are inalienably connected.

In what follows, I will make a review of modern and contemporary interpretations in order to expound their method, their view of the book's general mindset, and the way they comprehend the faith-works relationship.

The commentators I am going to review extend over the period 1852 – 2010 and will be presented in a chronological order.

Issues of contents and rhetoric, inter-textual factors (by which I mean the correspondence of the Epistle to Jesus' teaching, especially the Sermon on the Mount) and considerations that are related to authorship made Augustus Neander look at the Epistle as reflecting the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, and observe, at the same time, that the relation of continuity between faith and works is one of the central teachings in the

Epistle.²¹¹ Christ is seen as being manifested both in James, the Apostle in Jerusalem, and Paul, as the apostle for the gentiles.²¹²

In 1872 Robert Nelson, before Dibelius, specified the fact that the Epistle has “little or no connection in the sentences, which frequently follow one another without any noticeable relation.”²¹³ Nevertheless, since it is “replete with instructions to those outside,” namely to the Jews, the contemporary reader’s soul can benefit from its reading, but he/she must not omit its scanning from the perspective of Jesus’ person and ministry, because “the Law was by Moses, grace and truth by Jesus Christ.”²¹⁴ Authorship, justification and relationship between faith and works seem to be the focus of J. P. Lange and J. J. Van Oosterzee. They argue that the Epistle can be understood especially if one studies and takes into consideration its historical conditions (‘historical genesis’), Jewish context, and Christian-prophetical style, all these somehow determining its writing.²¹⁵ They consider that “the mind of James is rather practical and ethical than dogmatical and speculative.”²¹⁶ This observation results from the emphasis of the distinction between two types of faith: theoretical and practical. According to them, “the distinction is manifestly between *theoretic belief* unaccompanied by the practice of good works and *vital faith* abounding in good works.”²¹⁷ Edwin T. Winkler indicates the practical purpose of the Epistle, saying that “the primary design of the

²¹¹ Augustus Neander, *The Epistle of James Practically Explained*, trans. H. C. Connant (New York: Sheldon, 1852), 31, 35, 77, 78.

²¹² Neander, *James Practically Explained*, 11-12.

²¹³ Robert Nelson, *On the Epistle of James* (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1872), v.

²¹⁴ Nelson, *James*, 91.

²¹⁵ Jan Jacob van Oosterzee, Johann Peter Lange, *The Epistle General of James*, trans. Jacob Isidor Mombert (New York, C. Scribner & Co., 1867), 37.

²¹⁶ Oosterzee, Lange, *James*, 78.

²¹⁷ Oosterzee, Lange, *James*, 82.

Epistle was to encourage holy living. . . .”²¹⁸ Like other researchers, he considers that James criticizes an intellectual faith, opposed to the practical, active or vital faith.²¹⁹ E. H. Plumptre notices as well the “informal and unsystematic” structure of the Epistle, which evidently embarrasses the task of the literary analyst interested in the decipherment of “latent sequence of thought,” limiting him to a mere vague observation of the themes, apparently non-linear, displayed by the author at random.²²⁰ Subsequent to Arthur Carr’s adherence to the beliefs of the majority in his generation, regarding the acknowledgment of James, the Apostle of the church and Lord’s brother, as author of the Epistle mentioned above, brings into focus the idea that the Epistle is characterized by an ethical spirit and practical function, trying to show at the same time that the antagonism between Paul and James is a groundless supposition.²²¹ R. W. Dale joins those who believe that James is more interested in moral issues than theology. H. W. Fulford considers that beside the fact that James’ writing does not easily submit to a simple analysis, it “deals chiefly with Christian practice”,²²² however, he claims, there are certain theological considerations that can be drawn, and one can note the logic according to which the author of the Epistle sends forth his practical teachings with authority. James starts from evoking the unity of God’s being and the connection between his character and actions.²²³ Then he points to the internal unity of the one who believes in Jesus

²¹⁸ Edwin T. Winkler, *Commentary on the Epistle of James* (Philadelphia, Pa.: American Baptist Publication Society, 1888), 8.

²¹⁹ Winkler, *James*, 39 and 42.

²²⁰ E. H. (Edward Hayes) Plumptre, *The General Epistle of St. James, with Notes and Introduction* (Cambridge, Univ. Press, 1890), 43.

²²¹ Arthur Carr, *General Epistle of St. James* (Ca.: Cambridge University Press, 1896), xxxv.

²²² Henry William Fulford, *The General Epistle of St. James* (London: Methuen, 1901), 29.

²²³ Fulford, *The General Epistle*, 31.

Christ, which is the undivided link between what he believes and what he does privately or publicly. Fulford sums up the concern of James' writing in a concise and logical manner as such:

If God is one, man, made in His image, must be one also – not double-minded (i.8), not a hearer without being a doer (i.22) – not inconsistent and half- hearted in religious observance (i. 26, ii.1), or in obedience to the Law (ii.10), not professing a barren “faith” (2:14), not using the tongue for cursing as well as blessing (iii.9), not making the vain attempt (St Matt vi.24) to give part of oneself to God and part to pleasure (iv.4).²²⁴

Benjamin W. Bacon considers that James talks about an intellectual faith and a practical, lively one. The first type of faith, according to Bacon, which is mere knowledge, belief or insight, “to be of value, must have added to it, something more, - namely, works.”²²⁵

R. J. Knowling, who postulates James' status as author of the Epistle with persuasiveness and minuteness, gets to ascertain that James, similar to the Lord Jesus, promotes a social and personal Christian life, marked profoundly by the desideratum of purification (sanctification and honour).²²⁶ Nonetheless, he points out that the practical Christian life “is the root, of which morality and philanthropy are the fruit, and the Christian work is the outcome of faith and prayer.”²²⁷ Knowling rests on the idea, which is upheld by almost all those who agree with an early dating of the Epistle, that the pages of the Epistle of James “lay stress upon the moral advice and hortatory form . . . as contrasted with some of the more dogmatic of the New Testament books. . . .”²²⁸ Knowling himself

²²⁴ Fulford, *Epistle of St. James*, 31-32.

²²⁵ Benjamin W. Bacon, “The Doctrine of Faith in Hebrews, James, and Clement of Rome,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (The Society of Biblical Literature Stable, 1900), pp 12-21, 16.

²²⁶ R. J. Knowling, *The Epistle of St. James, with an Introduction and Notes*, Westminster Commentaries (London: Methuen, 1904), lxxiv.

²²⁷ Knowling, *The Epistle of St. James*, plxxv.

²²⁸ Knowling, *The Epistle of St. James*, 1.

considers that there are two kinds of faiths: a faith that is disconnected from works, and one which is in synergic relationship with action.²²⁹ Knowling also belongs to the trend of those who see James to be a moralist and consider this the main characteristic of the Epistle.²³⁰ Therefore, James does not mainly teach his addressees a certain thing concerning any record of Christian dogmatic, but he mostly puts with steadfastness, like a diagnostician of the spirit, his finger on the wound of the conflicts among the Jewish communities converted to Jesus, that perpetuate internal or relational vices. Joseph B. Mayor approaches the Epistle after prior research on its internal characteristics, and also after a synthesis of the relations that the Epistle has with other New Testament writings. Taking into account the opinions of the Forefathers of the Church on the Epistle's canonic nature, as well as its grammatical and linguistic structure, Mayor reaches the conclusion that the text parts belonging to James are qualified by some "leading principles upon which the whole depends" which, in turn, obviously have firm and complementary theological arguments at their basis, which considerably contribute to the unity of the Epistle, conferring it a peculiar Jewish style, a proper form and doctrine.²³¹ In terms of James' relationship with Paul, he argues that their Epistles "fit into one another at once."²³² Mayor notices Clement of Rome's viewpoint that envisages the relationship between faith and deeds. According to this relationship, Abraham "is rewarded neither for faith alone, nor works alone, but for faith combined with righteousness and truth, with obedience and hospitality."²³³ He

²²⁹ Knowling, *The Epistle of St. James*, 59.

²³⁰ Knowling, *The Epistle of St. James*, lxxii.

²³¹ Joseph B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James* (London: Macmillan, 1910), XI – 2.

²³² Mayor, *St. James*, clxxxviii.

²³³ Mayor, *St. James*, lxxi and 104.

stresses that the orthodox profession of faith is not sufficient for salvation.²³⁴

James Ropes is among those who believe in the unity of the Epistle of James, affirming at once the religious and moral character of the Epistle, as well as the themes that have a practical function, which encompass issues related to one's personal character and right conduct.²³⁵ The letter has an aphoristic style with paragraphs that exhibit a certain unity and logical progress, although the sentences have 'little illumination from the context,'²³⁶ and their paraphrase is not an easy job. The connection between some paragraphs is intermediated by linking words; these features render "the spirit of Hellenistic diatribe"²³⁷, although it is obvious that this spirit affectionately embraces ideas, Jewish and Christian alike. The literary form, Ropes claims, has its roots in the 'Greek history of the fourth and third century before Christ'²³⁸, whereas the literary type and style of the Epistle unveil with generosity the sapiential atmosphere of the Jewish culture and the unprecedented and innovative aura of Christian ideas. The fluent and accurate Greek, the correct syntax, the developed and sometimes unique vocabulary, compared with other NT writings and especially the direct hint at LXX are things that highlight it among the New Testament writings.²³⁹

James B. Adamson, tackling the features of style, form, and literary structure and, last but not least, the echo that the Old Testament has in the Epistle, considers that James, far from being deprived of design and theological cohesion, is "a quasi-prophetic letter of pastoral

²³⁴ Mayor, *St. James*, cxli.

²³⁵ Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1.

²³⁶ Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 2.

²³⁷ Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 3.

²³⁸ Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 7.

²³⁹ Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 24-26.

encouragement” whose goal, similar to Paul’s in his Epistles, “is to set forth the theonomic life in its essentials, that is, life lived according to God’s law.”²⁴⁰ The direction of the writing is, according to Adamson, towards determining the readers to put their faith into practice. He stresses the complementarity of faith with deeds showing that both of them are as necessary as they are inseparable.²⁴¹ Faith without works is like a human body bereft of expected vitality. Adamson concludes that “faith that produces no works is dead; and dead faith cannot produce works.”²⁴² Even if Adamson concentrates his interpretation on the principle that “there can be no distinguishing bias between ‘faith’ and ‘works’ and that ‘Christian faith cannot fail to produce Christian works,’”²⁴³ nevertheless he estimates that there is, though, a faith which is sometimes fruitless, mainly intellectual, and other times it actively obeys God. The semiotic approach detaches itself from the trend which conceives the existence of the theoretic faith.

Sophie Laws states from the very beginning and without reservation that “considered as a part of the Christian canon of holy scripture, the epistle of James is an oddity.” And the latter “comes into conflict with a tradition of teaching of Paul.”²⁴⁴ In “historical terms,” she considers that the Epistle “cannot be associated with any specific area of early Christianity as reflected in other documents of the N.T.”²⁴⁵ But in

²⁴⁰ James B. Adamson, *The Epistle of James* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1976), 11 and 20.

²⁴¹ Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, 38.

²⁴² Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, 124.

²⁴³ Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, 125.

²⁴⁴ Sophie Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1980), 1 and 34.

²⁴⁵ Laws, *A Commentary*, 32.

itself, the Epistle is a moral code meant to establish a kind of behaviour.²⁴⁶

Peter H. Davids, joining those who have attempted to discover the message of the Epistle, and using the form-critical method, reaches the conclusion that James is “basically a moral exhortation,” characterized by a certain thematic unity contained in a number of “paraenetic catalogues” which were transmitted in the shape of some sermons and sayings.²⁴⁷ Davids explains from the very beginning the fact that his methodological means borrow interpretative tools from the research area of traditional-criticism and redaction criticism with the purpose of answering some questions that concern authorship, provenance, structure, purpose and theology in the Epistle of James.²⁴⁸ The Epistle of James, which is a two-stage piece of work, contains textual segments without an apparent link between them, variable stylistics, proverbial sayings which seem to unify two ‘sense-units’, ‘link-words’ and a vocabulary which is different when it deals with the same topic.²⁴⁹ These elements make Davids consider the Epistle to be approachable in two stages, in the first place form-critically, then holistically. Discrediting the idea that James would be a piece whose fundamental character could be included in the genre of ‘wisdom literature’ or ‘paraenesis,’ Davids argues that the Epistle rightly belongs to the epistolary genre and it rather describes “the Palestinian church before the storms of war closed over it.”²⁵⁰ Davids is no exception in bringing arguments in favour of understanding that James attacked an intellectual faith, or intellectual assent to doctrine, which differed from the practical,

²⁴⁶ Laws, *A Commentary*, 2.

²⁴⁷ Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1982), 23, 24, 34.

²⁴⁸ Davids, *The Epistle*, 1.

²⁴⁹ Davids, *The Epistle*, 22-23.

²⁵⁰ Davids, *The Epistle*, 34.

true or lively faith. In this case, James would be using the noun πίστις with two meanings. One indicates intellectual assent to doctrine, and the other one trust in God.²⁵¹ Davids makes this differentiation, being aware, though, of three aspects: 1. the etymology of πίστις gives only the meaning of faith, belief, trust; 2. James uses this term in the texts around 2:14-19, namely in 1:3 and 6, 2:5, 5:15, with the meaning of trust; and 3. the rabbinic exegesis, to whose cultural background James belongs, sees Abraham's faith purely and simply as a work.²⁵² Davids comes close to my reading with respect to observing a continuous train of thought in the Epistle but he differs in terms of considering that James addresses an intellectual kind of faith.

As far as the difference between Paul and James is concerned, Davids underlines that these two writers, despite the fact that they use the same terms, still understand things differently; for instance, 'works' for Paul are rather "ceremonial rites added to the work of Christ," whereas 'works' for James undoubtedly have the meaning of moral deeds which "flow naturally from true faith."²⁵³

Ralph P. Martin, talking about the faith presented by James, shows that "James is polemicizing against an ultra-Pauline emphasis that turned faith into a slogan, a badge of profession, and thereby led to a position close to an antinomian disregard for all moral claims."²⁵⁴ Walking in the footsteps of Zmijewski, Martin underlines that the Epistle aims "to prevent the danger of a separation (*diastasis*) between faith and works, and τελ- plays the part of uniting the two. It is this coherence of faith and deeds that gives a unifying theme to the entire document and makes it a

²⁵¹ Davids, *The Epistle*, 50.

²⁵² Davids, *The Epistle*, 50 and 129.

²⁵³ Davids, *The Epistle*, 50-51.

²⁵⁴ Ralph P. Martin, *James*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 48 (Waco, Tex.: Thomas Nelson, 1988), lxxii.

genuinely Christian writing.”²⁵⁵ Concerning the faith displayed by James in the second part of chapter 2, Martin joins those who consider that the author deals with the matter of faith as a “pious sentiment or an intellectual acceptance.”²⁵⁶

There is also Andrew Chester, beside Martin, who admits that James offers more numerous and complex theological thoughts than Luther and Dibelius are ready to accept.²⁵⁷ Far from ignoring the critique of these two, Chester does not suggest that the Epistle of James would exhibit a ‘sustained overall theology,’ but he underscores the fact that it owns clear and meaningful theological accents, framed in theological registers such as eschatology and Christology. Chester, resorting to issues of context and background, takes into consideration the type of writing, the Epistle’s theological contents, the dogmatic coherence between the New Testament in general, Paul in particular, and James, as well as the meaning of the Epistle nowadays.²⁵⁸ Similar to other scholars, Chester is convinced that the Epistle of James “belongs to the style of teaching of the Wisdom Literature”²⁵⁹ and aims to equip the reader with practical pieces of advice and moral instructions so that he may know what to do in specific situations.²⁶⁰ In respect of the faith-works relationship, he considers that “works are primary,” whereas “faith is secondary.”²⁶¹

Lauri Thurén, being interested in elucidating the contrast between the structure and message of the Epistle, which some people believe to be disorganized and obscure, and its sophisticated style as well as the

²⁵⁵ Martin, *James*, lxxix

²⁵⁶ Martin, *James*, 80.

²⁵⁷ Andrew Chester and Ralph P. Martin, *The Theology of the Letters of James, Peter and Jude* (Ca.: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 4.

²⁵⁸ Chester and Martin, *The Theology of the Letters*, 4-5.

²⁵⁹ Chester and Martin, *The Theology of the Letters*, 9.

²⁶⁰ Chester and Martin, *The Theology of the Letters*, 9.

²⁶¹ Chester and Martin, *The Theology of the Letters*, 23-28.

elevated language, appeals to a hermeneutical approach of rhetorical orientation.²⁶² He thinks that it is not plausible to hold that James wants to inform the reader; on the contrary, he says, “James - as most texts - is to be seen as a tool for persuading the addressees, or modifying their attitudes, opinions, and behaviour.”²⁶³ His study identifies several rhetorical features, which more than facilitating the comprehension of James’ message, provide a basis for the study of the theology underlying its writing.²⁶⁴ Bruce B. Barton considers that James addresses certain practical matters and the truth that the author highlights is that faith must be put into action.²⁶⁵ He also considers that James refers to two types of faith, intellectual faith, called “easy-believe-ism” understood as an amount of knowledge (although James does not use the verb “know” but “believe”) and the true faith that produces good fruit.²⁶⁶

William R. Baker argues that speech-ethics is a major concern in James and it wholly reflects the speech-ethics in the Mediterranean world.²⁶⁷ Given his words, speech-ethics shares values with various cultures and antique periods, but some ideas are peculiar to James.²⁶⁸ His argument is based on the following quantitative data: “108 verses of James contain 54 imperatives. The unnoticed fact is that 23 of these 54 imperatives are concerned directly with matters pertaining to speech acts, and 6 more are concerned indirectly.”²⁶⁹ Referring to the nature of

²⁶² Lauri Thurén, “Risky Rhetoric in James?” *Novum Testamentum* 37, no. 3 (July 1, 1995): 262–84, 262, accessed January 15, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1561224>.

²⁶³ Thurén, “Risky Rhetoric in James?” 265.

²⁶⁴ Thurén, “Risky Rhetoric in James?” 282.

²⁶⁵ Bruce B. Barton, David R. Veerman, Ed. Grant Osborne, Series Ed., Philip W. Confort and Neil Wilson, *James* (Carol Stream, Illinois, Tyndale House Publishers, 1992), xi.

²⁶⁶ Barton et al., *James*, xix.

²⁶⁷ William R. Baker, *Personal Speech-Ethics in the Epistle of James* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 5.

²⁶⁸ Baker, *Personal Speech-Ethics*, 5.

²⁶⁹ Baker, *Personal Speech-Ethics*, 6.

the writing, Baker is sure that it is an ethical one.²⁷⁰ He highlights the fact that James' desire to solicit behavioural changes is actually his uppermost concern.²⁷¹ Regarding the relationship between faith and works, discussed by James in 2:14-26, Baker considers that the author "pictures faith as the junior partner 'working together with works' in 2:22, merely as an attempt to redress the imbalance others have caused."²⁷² Therefore, faith is less than its nearby partner, deed.

Todd C. Penner estimates that both the categorization as Hellenistic Wisdom and the alleged idea that James writes against Paul, or the wrong reception of his theology, have to be re-examined. These forethoughts, as well as the Epistle's language and style, represent reference points for the dating of the Epistle.²⁷³ He reckons that the apprehension of the Epistle of James contributes to the illumination of some areas in incipient Christianity, still left in the plentiful half-dark of history.²⁷⁴ Penner argues that the elevated language and sophisticated style of the Epistle of James are not extraordinary and impossible features for a writing accomplished by a Jew of that period of time. In reference to the contents of the Epistle, Penner considers that the textual units which open and close the writing, whose content is marked by the 'the call to purity',²⁷⁵ determine us not to overlook its prophetic and eschatological dimension, but to consider this work to be characterized by 'ethical

²⁷⁰ Baker, *Personal Speech-Ethics*, 6.

²⁷¹ Baker, *Personal Speech-Ethics*, 16.

²⁷² Baker, *Personal Speech-Ethics*, 17.

²⁷³ Todd C. Penner, *The Epistle of James and Eschatology: Re-Reading an Ancient Christian Letter* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 257.

²⁷⁴ Penner, *The Epistle of James*, 16.

²⁷⁵ Penner, *The Epistle of James*, 258.

instruction and sapiential exhortation,' clearly framed and obviously undergirded by eschatology.²⁷⁶

Douglas J. Moo thinks of James as being a sermon or homily transposed in the shape of a letter.²⁷⁷ Giving importance to modern literary techniques, and consulting the biblical and extra-biblical literature, insisting on the specific features of James' Greek language, and aware that the writers of the New Testament use Jewish concepts in their formulations and arguments, Moo is interested in the specific nature of the content in James, in the cultural background of James, in its genre, the persistent themes, key motifs, and the literary and theological meaning of the Epistle.²⁷⁸ Nonetheless, with a certain amount of caution, Moo believes that the reader had better look for a "central concern" rather than an overarching theme.²⁷⁹ Consequently, he thinks that 4:4-10 is "the emotional climax of the letter."²⁸⁰ As a central concern, Moo considers that this is "spiritual wholeness."²⁸¹ Regarding the relationship between faith and works, he is among the few commentators attentive to the fact that James "is not arguing that works must be added to faith."²⁸² He underlines that genuine faith is inevitably characterized by works, but he considers that Abraham's faith is much more than intellectual.

Matt A. Jackson McCabe, analyzing the internal traits of the Epistle (a work which was not written prior to Paul), including the Greek language that the author uses, the background that the rhetoric of the Epistle addresses, and the author's interest in the law, shows that "[t]he

²⁷⁶ Penner, *The Epistle of James*, 31 and 259.

²⁷⁷ Moo, *The Letter*, 37.

²⁷⁸ Moo, *The Letter*, 21, 34, 44-45.

²⁷⁹ Moo, *The Letter*, 45.

²⁸⁰ Moo, *The Letter*, 45-46.

²⁸¹ Moo, *The Letter*, 46.

²⁸² Moo, *The Letter*, 120.

fabric of James's soteriological thought has been woven from Jewish, Christian *and* Greek philosophical discourse.”²⁸³ He refutes the “essentialist” interpretation of the concept of “law,” according to which the “gospels,” which contain that set of central Christian teachings *par excellence*, are the topic to which the “perfect law” and “the law of freedom” refer, undoubtedly accepting the idea that the law in James is, however, substantially and directly influenced by Stoicism.²⁸⁴ Also, he considers that James’ phrase, “perfect law of freedom,” “can be understood as a response to Paul’s statements regarding the soteriological impotence of the law.”²⁸⁵ James is therefore attached, regarding this issue, more to Stoics like Cicero than to New Testament authors such as Paul, at whom he throws a glance mainly to disprove him.²⁸⁶ The author of the Epistle, McCabe thinks, rejects both the Pauline reflection that man is considered to be righteous by faith, without works, and the belief that “one can fulfill ‘the whole law’ simply by loving one’s neighbor as oneself.”²⁸⁷ In essence, James’ Epistle is one of the pieces of evidence of a sort of Christianity that proclaims a soteriology anchored in treasuring rather the Torah than the Gospel’s central teachings.²⁸⁸

Richard Bauckham accedes to an interpretation focused on the principle of self-reflexivity, appealing in this respect to Kierkegaard’s hermeneutical perspective, which dissociates the observation of the sacred text *per se* from the observation which fathoms both the text and the quality of activating the reader’s competence towards self-

²⁸³ Matt A. Jackson-McCabe, *Logos and Law in the Letter of James: The Law of Nature, the Law of Moses, and the Law of Freedom* (Leiden, The Netherlands: BRILL, 2001), 5.

²⁸⁴ McCabe, *Logos and Law*, 3 and 242.

²⁸⁵ McCabe, *Logos and Law*, 249.

²⁸⁶ McCabe, *Logos and Law*, 250.

²⁸⁷ McCabe, *Logos and Law*, 250.

²⁸⁸ McCabe, *Logos and Law*, 253.

assessment. The purpose of the second type of observation on the text consists both in avoiding “[substituting] study for faith and action”²⁸⁹ and in the willingness to surpass the temptation to approach the text in an objective, impersonal but cold manner. The reader should assume the necessary sensibility to perceive the text as God’s authentic voice that must be heard and obeyed at the same time.²⁹⁰ Bauckham highlights one of the essential shortcomings of the existentialist Danish philosopher, pointing out that with Kierkegaard “The antithesis between ‘objective’ study of the texts and ‘subjective’ appropriation of them as God’s word is too sharply drawn.”²⁹¹ Consequently, Bauckham suggests an approach to the Epistle of James which, given the character of “engaged hermeneutics,” may include in its undertaking both the renowned methods of biblical study, namely, historical, literary (literary forms and structure) and canonic, and “personal engagement” which, due to its personal nature (“passionate interestedness”), successfully facilitates self-reflexive action, which is so necessary for the appropriation of the text and its reception as God’s voice, present and personal.²⁹² For Bauckham, the cognitive action of understanding the text is as important as its application is in daily practice: “the point is to see oneself in the mirror and not to forget.”²⁹³ The parallel between understanding and practice is reiterated in the relationship between faith and action. Regarding the latter, Bauckham seems to show that it is circumstantial (meaning that the fulfillment of a work must be related to circumstances), and voluntary (the fulfillment of a work is related to the subject’s will, who considers it more or less imperious), since there is both a theoretical faith (“belief

²⁸⁹ Richard Bauckham, *James* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 5.

²⁹⁰ Bauckham, *James*, 5.

²⁹¹ Bauckham, *James*, 8.

²⁹² Bauckham, *James*, 10.

²⁹³ Bauckham, *James*, 10

without practice”), to which one has to add deeds willingly, and a practical one.²⁹⁴ After Bauckham points to three major structural parts of the Epistle (1:1, 1:2-27 and 2:1-5:20), he emphasizes that it is neither “a sequential argument” nor a “haphazard collection of heterogeneous paraenetic traditions” but it is clearly “a compendium of James’ wisdom, arranged, after an introductory epitome, in a series of discrete sections of various topics.”²⁹⁵

L. L. Cheung is interested in perceiving its genre, structure and the way in which James interprets and applies the Law received by means of Jesus tradition.²⁹⁶ A part of his concern is also focused on the Jewish writings (Jewish Scripture and Jewish writings such as “Qumran literature, Targums, apocrypha, pseudepigrapha, Philo’s writings, rabbinic writings, etc.”²⁹⁷) on whose seedbed the moral, theological and literary semblance of the Epistle grows spiritually and rises up. Taking into account the fact that the Epistle of James uses imperatives, moral examples, traditional materials and eschatological elements, and that it obviates a close author-recipient relationship and is qualified by a general applicability, Cheung thinks that it can be considered, without objection, as “wisdom instruction.”²⁹⁸

Without diminishing the historical focus of criticism²⁹⁹ or giving exaggerated importance to the interpretation of the Epistle from the perspective of its authorship,³⁰⁰ L. T. Johnson, analyzing the Epistle’s

²⁹⁴ Bauckham, *James*, 126.

²⁹⁵ Bauckham, *James*, 108.

²⁹⁶ Bauckham, *James*, 4.

²⁹⁷ Luke L. Cheung, *The Genre, Composition and Hermeneutics of the Epistle of James* (Carlisle, Cumbria UK, Waynesboro, Ga, USA: Paternoster Press, 2003), 2.

²⁹⁸ Cheung, *The Genre*, 272.

²⁹⁹ Luke Timothy Johnson, *Brother of Jesus, Friend of God: Studies in the Letter of James* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 235.

³⁰⁰ Johnson, *Brother of Jesus*, 25.

“literary shape” and exploring the historical and social circumstances which accommodate the literary motifs (elements) of the book, reckons that the Epistle of James is characterized by a series of moral exhortations based on an important number of theological prerequisites.³⁰¹ It is relevant for this statement that in the 108 verses of the Epistle there are 59 imperatives accompanied by explanations for which the author employs a succession of “participial constructions,” *gar* clauses, *hoti* clauses and purpose clauses.³⁰² All the moral assertions are, in Johnson’s opinion, built upon the pedestal of 25 explicit references to God. The term (ho theos) is used 15 times, the word “pater” three times, and the other references using the term “kyrios” found most of the time in the concept “ho theos” is present in the latter implicitly.³⁰³ These data cause us to believe, Johnson thinks, that James’ “statements about God and his commands do not sit side by side in accidental juxtaposition.”³⁰⁴

In Mark Edward Taylor’s opinion, the general insight into the Epistle, whether coherent or discontinuous, influences the way in which the connections between paragraphs or their structure are seen.³⁰⁵ Taylor is especially interested in finding the structure of the Epistle of James. Unlike Dibelius’ interpretative strategy based on the idea that the genre of this Epistle is a paraenetical discontinuity, and unlike Johnson who relies on thematic questions, linguistic parallels and rhetorical criticism, Taylor figures out, following the unifying factors of the Epistle, that “the validity of a structure or lack thereof is only as valid as the underlying methodology and its correct application,” and “structural assessments are

³⁰¹ Johnson, *Brother of Jesus*, 247.

³⁰² Johnson, *Brother of Jesus*, 247.

³⁰³ Johnson, *Brother of Jesus*, 245.

³⁰⁴ Johnson, *Brother of Jesus*, 247.

³⁰⁵ Mark E. Taylor, *A Text-Linguistic Investigation into the Discourse Structure of James* (London; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2006), 4 .

driven by methodology and presuppositions.”³⁰⁶ Consequently, Taylor recommends a quite new method, still in development, called text-linguistics, whose essential starting point lies in the consideration that the “meaning in language occurs in units of text beyond the word and sentence level, units designated as ‘discourses’.”³⁰⁷ This intrinsic premise does not exclude the importance of words and simple sentences in the text. On the contrary, Taylor underlines the fact that “the macro-structure conveys the large thematic ideas that in turn govern the micro-structures, and thus the whole text.”³⁰⁸ In conclusion, Taylor believes that James, being loyal to the Jewish concepts of wisdom and obedience, revisited and renewed by Jesus, advises his addressees, who pass through the suffering of social injustice, to persevere in obedience, manifested in love towards God and neighbours.³⁰⁹

Darian R. Lockett, without excluding the historical value and literary critical analysis, and confident that “in recent studies rhetorical, social, and ideological (or worldview) analyses have been successfully integrated to illuminate different texts,”³¹⁰ establishes his research on the “assumption that there is a rhetorical purpose in James.”³¹¹ Lockett picks out the idea that the rhetorical function of a letter, like that of James, consists either in persuading readers as concerns the fulfillment of certain actions which should take place sometime in the future, or in emphasizing something - good or bad - which takes place in the present. His research mainly centres around the “purity language of James,” understood in an unrestrictive way and around its effect upon the “text’s earlier

³⁰⁶ Taylor, *A Text-Linguistic*, 6.

³⁰⁷ Taylor, *A Text-Linguistic*, 38.

³⁰⁸ Taylor, *A Text-Linguistic*, 38.

³⁰⁹ Taylor, *A Text-Linguistic*, 124.

³¹⁰ Darian Lockett, *Purity and Worldview in the Epistle of James*, 1 edition (London; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2008), 5.

³¹¹ Lockett, *Purity*, 5.

audiences.”³¹² Practically, the one who assumes a life of purity, a life that contrasts significantly with the negative one of pollution, is qualified by “the commitment to unite faith in Jesus (2.1) with works especially illustrated in caring for the ‘poor’ (2.14-16) and not showing partiality to the ‘rich’ (2.1-4).”³¹³

Mariam J. Kamell tackles the Epistle of James from the perspective that its issue is soteriology and the final judgment.³¹⁴ She indicates that the Epistle of James is a “wisdom text following the teachings of Jesus,” whose purpose lies in preparing the audience for leading a godly life which will be able to pass the exam of judgment.³¹⁵ Even if Kamell is convinced by the revelatory competence of works and by the interconnective character of the faith-works relationship, nevertheless, following MuBner and Stein, she admits with assurance that “Faith has the priority for James.”³¹⁶

In conclusion, one can make about these sections the following remarks. First of all, Luther’s observation in the “Preface,” that James would be a compendium of sermons, has been continued by the reception of it by Dibelius as an apparently random composition of ethical sayings and treatises deprived of logical connection or progressivity. One can notice now that there were scholars before Dibelius who noticed a lack of logical continuity, such as Nelson and Plumptre. Therefore, the critical perspective of Dibelius has not come on an un-logged area. However, a much larger number of interpreters have noticed either a

³¹² Lockett, *Purity*, 6.

³¹³ Lockett, *Purity*, 172.

³¹⁴ Mariam J. Kamell, “The Soteriology of James in Light of Earlier Jewish Wisdom Literature and the Gospel of Matthew” (Thesis, University of St Andrews, 2010), v, accessed December 22, 2014, <http://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/handle/10023/977>.

³¹⁵ Kamell, “The Soteriology,” 2.

³¹⁶ Kamell, “The Soteriology,” 182.

logical continuity, a homogenous structure, or a clear purpose. Among these, we can mention Neander, Winkler, Fulford, Bacon, Knowling, Mayor, Ropes, Adamson, Davids, Martin, Carr, Thurén, Penner, Bauckham, Cheung, Moo, Johnson, Taylor, Lockett and Kamell. It is evident, therefore, that there exists a modern trend of interpretation that appreciates the Epistle for a certain internal logic or for its moral or theological sense. Secondly, among those who cling to Luther in the “preface,” arguing in favour of the irreconcilable conflict between Paul and James, there are Laws and Carson. Nonetheless, those who find themselves involved in the reconciliation between Paul and James, undertaken indirectly by Luther in the public discourses, are interpreters like Carr, Mayor, Davids and Penner. Thirdly, among those who are convinced that James focuses on the indivisible relation between faith and works, like Dibelius, and interpret the Epistle taking into account this relation consistently, there are a few interpreters, namely Neander, Fulford and Mayor. Also, there is a large number of those who, even if they underscore the synergism faith-works, still divide faith into the intellectual and the practical, as if works did not result structurally from faith, contrary to what Luther and Dibelius indicate, as though they were attachable to faith by will. Among those who claim that James makes a difference between theoretical and practical faith, there are scholars like Lange and Van Oosterzee, Winkler, Bacon, Knowling, Adamson, Davids, Martin, Barton and Bauckham. Beside them, there are some interpreters who consider that either faith is a secondary associate of works, like Baker, or has priority over works, like Kamell. What is clear is that, although up to the publishing of Dibelius’ commentary in 1920 there had been certain commentators who stayed consistent with the synergic understanding faith throughout their commentary, yet after 1920 more and more commentators assumed that James differentiated between two types of faith, intellectual and practical. Moreover, some commentators look at faith and works as being placed on different value levels, as if they

were different domains which would or should intersect from a moral viewpoint.

3.1. A short, critical evaluation of modern interpretations

As we have seen, certain interpreters reckon that James highlights two types of faith, intellectual and practical: the former does not act at all, while the latter does good works. Now, if the former is a faith, in the true sense of the word, and according to James 2:22, faith is synergic with works, then it will act inevitably. If it does not act as one expects, then there are two possibilities: either it is not faith, but a sum of general knowledge, or this faith omits good works. If we admit that the faith in 2:14-26 is intellectual, a sum of general knowledge (although it is evident that James uses the verb πιστεύω and the noun πίστις, not the verb “to know” or the noun “knowledge”), then the demand in 2:18 (“Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works”³¹⁷) is exaggerated, and the assertion in 2:22 (“You see that faith was active along with his works”) concerns something unreal, because the one who has moral knowledge does not always perform good deeds. It is difficult, therefore, to claim that faith has doctrinal knowledge as its meaning. If, on the other hand, faith in 2:14-26 presupposes refraining from doing good, a reality which is blamed by the author and called a sinful action, ἁμαρτία (4:17), then this is not an intellectual faith but one which acts by omission.

In another train of thought, if we admit that there is an intellectual faith, then we would adopt the consideration that there is a faith which is

³¹⁷ ESV.

not connected with works but which, in order to “perfect” itself, must have works attached to it, which would set us in opposition with the synergistical mindset about the faith-works relationship evoked by James. According to the concept of synergy, deeds automatically have a place alongside faith. The main shortcoming of the concept of intellectual or “purely doctrinal”³¹⁸ faith lies in the fact that this concept involves the idea that theoretical faith could somehow grow up or transform into an authentic deep faith, by adopting works. In this case, the works would be accessories, not the fruit of faith, as in Luther’s interpretation, yet James treats faith and works as a structural unit.

The goal of this thesis is to understand the Epistle of James without resorting to the categorical (dualistic) separation between the theoretical and the practical, or between faith and action, because both the Hebrew culture and James’ synergism perceive faith and action only as a unity.

If we were to stay loyal to James’ synergism, then we could not accept the concept of faith which does not act; on the contrary, we should consider that any faith is connected with works synergically, and works, in their plurality, express the nature of faith. In this case, on the one hand, there would exist a dead faith, which performs sinful deeds that lead to death, and on the other hand, a lively faith, which leads to salvation. The dead faith is not outwardly inactive (because not doing what is good at the moment when circumstances ask for it actually means a great evil, evil by omission) but inwardly, deprived of any sensibility towards good deeds. This point of view draws us near both to Luther’s contextual-pastoral perspective on faith and to the Hebrew concept of faith recalled by Dibelius, and at the same time it diverges considerably from many of the modern interpretations mentioned before.

³¹⁸ Davids, *James*, 119.

There remain, however, several questions: why do an important number of modern interpretations conceive a type of intellectual or theoretical faith, or why do they perceive the intellect, in general, as being detached from works, as if theory and practice were two different spheres of life? Or why are faith and works unequally appreciated so that faith will be regarded either as something secondary, or as something primary in relation to works? We will sketch the answer to these questions in the first part of Chapter two where, beside C.M. Taylor, we will include the path of modernity of differentiating and separating the theoretical from the practical and, also, the steps taken towards the prevalence of reason and the underestimation of action and life.

Chapter II

The genealogy of theory–practice distinction in a secular age: analysis and correction

1. The philosophical analysis of modernity made by Charles M. Taylor

In the first part of Chapter II, I will present an interpretation of Modernity by the Canadian philosopher, Charles M. Taylor, in one of his outstanding works, entitled *A Secular Age*. This interpretation will help us clarify how exactly one has reached the situation where internality and externality are placed on superposed levels of value and why exactly, in modernity, the theoretical is treated as a field distinct from the practical one. The stages of this brief undertaking are the following: a) the demarcation of the paradigmatic modern track covered from Descartes to the acknowledgment, on the whole, of the prevalence of the thinking and theoretical over that of the practical and life; and b) the suggestion of the therapeutic bases for correcting the modern epistemological-cosmological paradigm. On the basis of the first stage, we will be able to consider that there is a probability according to which the separation of faith into the theoretical and practical is an interpretative exercise carried out under the influence of modern thinking. In accord with the second stage, we will be able to notice that an interpretation that does not appeal to the differentiation between theory and practice also presupposes the adoption of a correction of the modern paradigm so that it will make room, in the same sphere, both for reason and theory and for life and practice.

1.1. An exposition of the epistemological trajectory of Modernity

Taylor, in his book, “A Secular Age,” presents a story of what Western man calls ‘secularization.’ He surveys three different meanings of secularism, viewed from three distinct angles: the first meaning of secularism is viewed from the perspective suggested by the state’s outlook on the convergence between political organizations and faith in God. This viewpoint points out that while

the political organization of all pre-modern societies was in some way connected to, based on, guaranteed by some faith in, or adherence to God, or some notion of ultimate reality, the modern Western state is free from this connection.³¹⁹

In other words, secularism consists in the fact that the state is totally separated from faith and is entirely independent from any religious form and beliefs. Religion is a matter of privacy and the state includes believers and non-believers alike.³²⁰ According to the second perspective,

secularity consists in the falling off of religious belief and practice, in people turning away from God, and no longer going to Church. In this sense, the countries of western Europe have mainly become secular—even those who retain the vestigial public reference to God in public space.³²¹

The third meaning of secularism is suggested by the conditions that have made the state marginalize any religious identification. These conditions consist in the fact that religion has been removed from the centre of

³¹⁹ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 1.

³²⁰ Taylor, *A Secular*, 1.

³²¹ Taylor, *A Secular*, 2.

social and ethical preoccupations and has been transformed into a human option, among many others.³²² The plurality of options and, then, the multiplication in a considerable number of these options illustrates the meaning of secularity.

The question that Taylor poses as the basis of his endeavour is: “why is it too hard to believe in God in (in the many milieus of) the modern West, while in 1500 it was virtually impossible not to?”³²³ He does not agree either with the first signification of secularity or with the second, but with the third one. Regarding the latter signification, secularity did not mainly appear at the beginning of the attack of science upon religion, but the decentralization of faith by society and the individual appeared because that traditional Christian society followed paths of thinking which progressively divided the transcendent from the immanent, up to the point where the former vanished totally in the spheres of interest of modern societies, remaining somewhere in the past horizon of history.

The dawn of separating the transcendent from the immanent had appeared previously with the “nominalist” attack upon Aquinas’ “realism.” The nominalists, being preoccupied mainly with things, had contributed to the elaboration of the distinction between the immanent order and the transcendental reality.³²⁴ The trend of the differentiation between nature and supernature had been carried forth by the reformers, who, in fact, “did everything they could to disentangle the order of grace from that of nature.”³²⁵ This certifies that the change from the “supernatural” realm to the “natural” one started, ironically, in Latin

³²² Taylor, *A Secular*, 3.

³²³ Taylor, *A Secular*, 539.

³²⁴ Taylor, *A Secular*, 542, 773.

³²⁵ Taylor, *A Secular*, 542.

Christendom, Taylor underlines, sometime in the period between the late Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern period.

The special inclination towards the natural constitution of the world, a paradigmatic interpretative exercise, which ignores the holistic transcendental-immanent perspective on the universe, matched post-Galilean natural science perfectly.³²⁶ The convergence between the orientation towards the order of the material world and the enterprise of the new physics peaked with the moment when there was sketched the idea that physical reality does not need any spiritual purpose or supernatural reality located somewhere beyond the physical order, in order to explain what is concrete and palpable.

From the moment when, on the one hand, the immanent was selected and appreciated to the detriment of the transcendent, and on the other hand, the idea of the sufficiency of the immanent order became essential for research and knowledge in general, there was only one step to take to acknowledge that reason is a self-sufficient faculty for attaining the knowledge and fulfilment of human progress. The complexity of the natural structure is deciphered with the help of some keys, which are related to reason's categories of knowledge, but in no case to revelation and the means of receiving the transcendent sphere - transcendence being removed from consideration. These epistemological keys are put at our disposal by philosophers like Descartes, Kant and Feuerbach, and scientists like Copernicus, Darwin and Freud.

Another element in the seedbed of secularity is the emergence, in the forefront of Western culture, of the new distinction, this time between the inner and outer side of the human being, a distinction that continues up to modernity in the line from Descartes to Rorty.³²⁷ In pre-

³²⁶ Taylor, *A Secular*, 542.

³²⁷ Taylor, *A Secular*, 539.

modernity, man's internality was one with his externality,³²⁸ but in modernity, once disenchanted, the self underwent the phenomenon of cementation and sealing of the demarcation – which was only formal and open before - between the reason (inside) and the physical or corporality (outside).³²⁹ Since Descartes sees the material event like a mechanism and the human will as having to do only with the intellect, then the clear and insurmountable demarcation imposes itself between mind and body.³³⁰ In this situation, a domineering function is conferred upon the mind, a function of control over the body, which is given a prevailing position.

With the disappearance of the spiritual world, once considered as being beyond our physical world through disenchantment, a concern for reason appears. Interiorisation is the following step that accompanies the inner-outer distinction.³³¹ The only place where one can find reasonable explanation is the inside.

After having intensified these changes of the self, we have reached self-knowledge and self-control. The inner space exposes the necessity for the discipline of self-control, particularly in the area of sex and anger.³³² Here, a turn at the level of self-knowledge takes place, according to which one passes from revealed knowledge, mediated by the divine intercessor - the perspective that the ancients used to call "the eye of God" - to the knowledge that does not need any external mediation. On this road, thus inaugurated, of self-reflexion, "various spiritual disciplines" enter, from Montaigne, the Romantics with their "ethic of authenticity," to the

³²⁸ Taylor, *A Secular*, 36.

³²⁹ Taylor, *A Secular*, 300.

³³⁰ Taylor, *A Secular*, 131.

³³¹ Taylor, *A Secular*, 539-540.

³³² Taylor, *A Secular*, 540.

contemporary concepts of the self's inner depths.³³³ The confidence in our moral ordering produces a transformation of the self, from one "not open and porous and vulnerable to a world of spirits and powers"³³⁴ to a "buffered" self, in the sense that one is one's own master, the meaning of all things is inside, the most powerful and vivid emotions are in the "mind," one has something, one is independent.³³⁵ Society, deprived through the process of disenchantment of cosmological classical principles and of the intuitions of pre-modern physics, has the human being at its centre, independent of transcendent constraints, for whose good everything is projected and made.³³⁶

Therefore, there exists the buffered self, self-centredness and individuality, three social-cultural realities which not only endorse each other, but also drive further the return to the self, initiated by the Reformation, thus decisively changing old forms of religious life centred around collective ritual and practice.³³⁷ Individualism reaches more stages of its evolution: personal commitment, self-examination, self-development and authenticity, and then, "it naturally spawns an instrumental individualism, which is implicit in the idea that society is there for the good of individuals."³³⁸ Another conjunction appears, that between the instrumentalist individualism defined by the purpose of the self to control everything, even time,³³⁹ and human-centrist desires.

Out of the desire to escape the "world of spirits and magic forces" and to escape from being haunted by superior powers, humankind, in

³³³ Taylor, *A Secular*, 539-540.

³³⁴ Taylor, *A Secular*, 27.

³³⁵ Taylor, *A Secular*, 539.

³³⁶ Taylor, *A Secular*, 540.

³³⁷ Taylor, *A Secular*, 541.

³³⁸ Taylor, *A Secular*, 541.

³³⁹ Taylor, *A Secular*, 542.

Western culture, seeks the protection of a way of understanding, which may supply it with a sense of power, control, invulnerability and independence or freedom. This way of escaping from a world dominated by the transcendent, Taylor notes, takes the shape of a cognitive faculty of "objectification."³⁴⁰ The process of disenchantment has found its comfortable and coveted habitat in the objectification of all things, a perspective that, again, has not made any room for a superior reality, God, or other spiritual forces. Taylor says that objectification consists in "grasping the matter studied as something quite independent of us, where we don't need to understand it all through our involvement with it, or the meanings it has in our lives."³⁴¹ The human mind, at the rise of modernity, is the only vantage point from which the matter is reconnoitred and evaluated. Meaning is disconnected from life. In this way, the mind has conquered its position of prevalence and lordship over action, experience and practice.

Not only do things start to be objectified in a deterministic framework, but also humanity itself is conceived as it is in itself, as being part of a whole material mechanism, which can be grasped from a position of mental disengagement, even the very self is seen from a distance. What is relevant for the mind has significance, because the mind, by virtue of its capacity to disconnect, is what gives meaning. The surrounding reality has no control over us; the mind, by objectification, controls all things:

To objectify a given domain is to deprive it of normative force for us, or at least to bracket the meanings it has for us in our lives. If we take a domain of being in which hitherto the way things are has defined meanings or set standards for us, and we now take a new stance towards it

³⁴⁰ Taylor, *A Secular*, 548.

³⁴¹ Taylor, *A Secular*, 746.

as neutral, without meaning or normative force, we can speak of objectifying it.³⁴²

This self-detachment or disengagement from physical reality or withdrawal in neutrality for the purpose of gaining the “view from nowhere,” leads to the religious phenomenon, exceptionally modern, called “excarnation.”³⁴³ This term refers to the fact that the religious life, with everything it means, has undergone a transfer from the level of the bodily form of ritual, worship and practice to the intellectual level. Man does not draw closer to God in a bodily, practical and public way, but mainly intellectually.³⁴⁴ In the religious exercise, the intellect is prominent and sufficient for the contact with transcendental reality, whereas practice is a secondary and adjacent option. Obviously, the idea of “excarnation” supposes two things: firstly, that religiosity has chiefly become a mental or theoretical constant and, secondly, that the intellect is seen as autonomous, estranged and dominant over the practical domain. Theory and practice are now in different spheres of rationality. Disembodied reasoning demonstrates why theology today involves the primacy of theoretical over practical reasoning, as Oliver Davies observes.³⁴⁵

At this point we can consider that the dualistic division between the intellectual and the practical, as two separate spheres of human life, can constitute the stage on which faith itself is separated dualistically into intellectual (the “excarnated” type of faith) and practical faith, because as one can grasp God theoretically and then practically, in the same way one

³⁴² Taylor, *A Secular*, 283.

³⁴³ Taylor, *A Secular*, 288, 545, 613.

³⁴⁴ Taylor, *A Secular*, 613.

³⁴⁵ Oliver Davies, “Scotus, Eckhart and the Case of Transformation Theology,” [www.Academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu) (2014) 3, accessed September 27, 2014, http://www.academia.edu/1573260/Scotus_Eckhart_and_the_Case_of_Transformation_Theology.

can endorse the existence of a theoretical/intellectual faith in God and, by contrast, a practical one.

Assuming explicitly the risk of upsetting Catholics and Protestants alike, Taylor draws attention to the fact that religious life, after the Western Reform, abandoned quite a lot of the linguistic-communicative activity of bodily “habitus” on the one hand, and symbolic expression in art, poetry, music, dance, on the other hand, restricting itself to that of prose or descriptive language.³⁴⁶ Dogmatic and practical rationality have continued to represent theology’s specific tools, but they work on different levels of research. The major focus of religion returns to the grasping of the “correct propositional truth” about God in one case and the right action in the other.³⁴⁷ In the first case, the forms of worship which result from the assuming of those truths can be varied at will, whereas in the second case, the right action comes only after a “successful imposition of reason.”³⁴⁸ Taylor bemoans the fact that for neither of these cases does the paradigm of bodily emotion represent a *criterion* for right action, as it does, by contrast, in the case of the term ‘agape’ in the New Testament, which stands for God’s incarnated love, love in act.³⁴⁹ Similarly, take another term in the New Testament, “splanchnizesthai,” translated as “taking pity,” which highlights that the feeling of pity involves the mind-body relationship, because its main locus of occurrence is the bowels.³⁵⁰ Since, in modernity, action and life do not have epistemological relevance, it makes truth be treated in isolation in the cold chambers of reason.

³⁴⁶ Taylor, *A Secular*, 615.

³⁴⁷ Taylor, *A Secular*, 615.

³⁴⁸ Taylor, *A Secular*, 615.

³⁴⁹ Taylor, *A Secular*, 615.

³⁵⁰ Taylor, *A Secular*, 741.

According to the foregoing argument, we can observe the fact that both the separation between the intellectual and the practical, as well as the declaration of the prevalence of reason over practice and life, are modern paradigmatic reflexes, formed and fuelled by the exaltation of disengaged reason and, more profoundly, by the contrast between, or even segregation of, transcendental reality and immanence (“the belief that there is nothing beyond the “natural” order.”³⁵¹), initiated by nominalists, taken over by the reformed culture and by Cartesian rationalism. Regarding the tendency of modern interpretations to divide faith into the theoretical and the practical, one can only say that there is a certain probability that this tendency may be a tribute paid to modernity.

Given the fact that this division contrasts with James’ synergic conception of Jewish origin, it obliges us to distance ourselves from it, but not before making the change in the paradigmatic foundation that upholds it.

1.2. Correcting the paradigm of Modernity

The phenomenon of “excarnation,” which appeared in the background of the modern paradigm of disembodied reason, took shape both as an immediate response to the body’s impulses, sex and violence in particular, and from the motivation to exclude bodily desire as an expression of the aspiration for “the higher” and “fullness.”³⁵² The first modern reaction towards bodily desire was called by Taylor “ethical suppression” and the second one “disenchanted reduction.”³⁵³ Taylor underscores the fact that there have been some attempts to rehabilitate the body. Among these, there is the celebration of the value of sensual

³⁵¹ Taylor, *A Secular*, 553.

³⁵² Taylor, *A Secular*, 607.

³⁵³ Taylor, *A Secular*, 615.

desire, something similar to the moral changes promoted by Hugh Hefner and “Playboy,” but this rehabilitation of the body has a distorted effect, sometimes anti-human and, not lastly, superficial, in the sense that it does not solve the problem of disenchanting reduction.³⁵⁴ The transformation that the Canadian philosopher aims to accomplish is one according to which the mind will be placed, conceptually, on the same level of value and epistemology as action, and each constituent of the physical and human universe will be perceived as “channels of contact with fullness,” with the transcendental source.³⁵⁵ In the first place, in order to make this change we will have “to heal the division within us that disengaged reason has created, setting thinking in opposition to feeling or instinct or intuition.”³⁵⁶ And, in the second place, we will also “need to make God more fully present in everyday life and all its contexts, which led people to invest these contexts with a new significance and solidity.”³⁵⁷ Even though Taylor sketches the therapeutic solution of the “excarnation” phenomenon generally, without indicating a certain ideological line, his proposal to adopt a non-dualist perspective on the mind-body relation first of all, and then a paradigm of unification of the transcendent with the immanent, remains fundamental for the present enterprise.

In the next section of this chapter, I will recommend the adoption of a philosophical paradigm which will eliminate the mind-body division, and I will make room for a perspective according to which transcendent reality and the immanent order overlap.

³⁵⁴ Taylor, *A Secular*, 766, 502.

³⁵⁵ Taylor, *A Secular*, 766.

³⁵⁶ Taylor, *A Secular*, 9.

³⁵⁷ Taylor, *A Secular*, 145.

2. Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic correction of the modern paradigm

As we have seen, a key moment that opened the path for celebrating disembodied reasoning is Rene Descartes' rationalism. One of those who vehemently oppose the epistemological Cartesian viewpoint, and pursue its correction, is Charles Sander Peirce (1839 – 1914), the founder of American pragmatism.³⁵⁸

Peirce brings to light the fact that Descartes' philosophical reconstruction started with the admission of scepticism and the granting of the position of epistemological authority to "the human mind," considering as well that the mind is the "ultimate source of truth."³⁵⁹ In order to prove the contrary of Descartes' epistemological perspective and to correct his position, the American philosopher brings four human incapacities to the foreground: 1. "We have no power of Introspection, but all knowledge of the internal world is derived by hypothetical reasoning from our knowledge of external facts."³⁶⁰ 2. "We have no power of Intuition, but every cognition is determined logically by previous cognitions."³⁶¹ 3. "We have no power of thinking without signs."³⁶² And 4: "We have no conception of the absolutely incognizable."³⁶³

In what follows I will point out that both Peirce's critiques, and their connotations, contribute significantly to the construction of an

³⁵⁸ CP 5.414.

³⁵⁹ CP 5.391.

³⁶⁰ CP 5.265.

³⁶¹ CP 5.265.

³⁶² CP 5.265.

³⁶³ CP 5.265.

epistemological paradigm according to which reason is of the same value and on the same epistemological level as action, and theory as practice.

2.1. The derivation of the internal world from the knowledge of external facts

In this section, I will point out three aspects. Firstly, according to Peirce's philosophy, the mind does not occupy the position of absolute epistemological authority. Secondly, internality and externality merge into each other, and thirdly, the derivation of the internal world, by hypothetical inference, reveals that the mental world is epistemically connected with the external world, the former being unable to function outside the latter.

Right from the first point in his critique of Descartes, Peirce opposes the validation of the capacity of introspection. Introspection exists if knowledge of the mental world cannot be explained without it, admitting the existence of the introspective competence according to Descartes.³⁶⁴ However, Peirce demonstrates the opposite. He endorses the "derivation of the internal world from our knowledge of external facts." This assertion refers to the fact that man has no knowledge that he possesses without this knowledge being initially derived from the external world by observation.³⁶⁵ Let us take for example the sensation of redness. It is true that every sensation is partly determined by mental conditions. Namely, the sensation is something internal because it is an internal state, and secondly, because it is favoured by certain conditions which depend on the faculty of cognitive judgment. We know that the mind has knowledge of the colour "red" since at the mental level there is the sensation of red, which is already constituted, nevertheless the sensation

³⁶⁴ CP 5.246.

³⁶⁵ CP 5.224.

of red is derived from the external world, where an object of this colour, in fact, exists.³⁶⁶ We could say, therefore, that the sensations that the mind owns are derived from the external world.

Peirce takes a step further approaching this issue from the phenomenological perspective. He shows that behind the eye, which is responsible for the intermediation of the sensation, there is an *ego*, to which the epistemological conscientious judgements belong, about which the philosopher speaks more extensively only in the chapter on semiotics. But the mental impression which forms after the sensations, let us say visual, are percepts - they represent "our logically initial data."³⁶⁷ The percept, being formed on the framework of the contact between the self and the external world, is the mental impression about an object of a certain colour and features, which stays against the will and which, by virtue of the concepts that we have about its characteristics, can be associated with other objects. These percepts, given that they are "of the nature of thought" involve "their qualities of feelings, their reaction against my will, and their generalizing or associating element."³⁶⁸ All these three types of psychical elements correspond to the three phenomenological categories about which we will talk later. What results from here is that in Peirce, knowledge takes place based on the concrete experience of things in the external world and of their phenomenological representation.

Another approach is the one from the angle of formal logic. Peirce draws attention, however, to the fact that the logical manner, through which we derive the internal knowledge from the external world, is a hypothetic inference. More exactly, we know that our mind has the

³⁶⁶ CP 5.245, 7.376.

³⁶⁷ CP 8.144.

³⁶⁸ CP 8.144.

sensation of redness. Also, we know that there is an object in the external world which has the quality of the colour “red.” And we conclude that the quality of “red” has its origin in the external world, which is an inference with a character of hypothesis, but this conjecture is enough to propose a way of explicating the appearance of the sensations in the mind.

Peirce does the same with emotions. Because there exists “a relative character in the outward thing” which corresponds to the nature of the sensation of anger, it makes us infer that the feeling of anger - which is in fact relative to particular circumstances and to a particular time - originates in that thing, vile and abominable.³⁶⁹ And this way of judging is a hypothetic inference. The hypothesis or abduction “may be defined as an argument which proceeds upon the assumption that a character which is known necessarily to involve a certain number of others, may be probably predicated of any object which has all the characters which this character is known to involve.”³⁷⁰ This is the approach we also have to the aesthetic feeling, moral issues or those related to the will. The will, in particular, is the “power of concentrating the attention, of abstracting.”³⁷¹ Consequently, Peirce considers, “knowledge of the power of abstracting may be inferred from abstract objects.”³⁷² Although, in this particular case, we have to say that, even if the will concentrates on abstract objects, this does not necessarily prove the derivation of the mental data from the external world, but rather the fact that the data are interconnected in a coalescent way.

Following from all these, one can notice the following three implications: 1. the fact that the existence of internal knowledge is dependent on the knowledge of the external world implies the

³⁶⁹ CP 5.247.

³⁷⁰ CP 5.276.

³⁷¹ CP 5.248.

³⁷² CP 5.248.

dethronement of reason from the pedestal of epistemological authority and its dispossession of the responsibility of being the only source of truth. 2. The fact that the “percept” is conceived as a mediator between the physical level and that of thought denotes the fusion, at the epistemological level, of experience and reason, another element that attests that internality and externality permeate each other. In Peirce’s opinion, the internal and external are on the same value scale. 3. From the perspective of formal logic, in Peirce, the mind adopts the forms of probable inference, fundamentally heuristical, unlike Descartes, where reason operates especially deductively or mathematically. The equipping of his philosophy with inferential-abductive instruments confirms the importance given by Peirce both to the abstract and theoretical elements and to the particular and concrete data.

2.2. Mind and action

The question raised by Peirce in the second point of his critique of Descartes is related to intuition. Since the internal data are always derived from the data of the external world, more simply said a piece of knowledge derives from another one, then we cannot talk about the existence of intuition, namely of a “cognition not determined by a previous cognition of the same object”³⁷³

Peirce criticises the pure apperception of the ego in the Cartesian perspective, appealing to the external world of acts. He reminds us, as Kant underlines, that the late usage of the personal pronoun “I” by children “indicates an imperfect self-consciousness in them.”³⁷⁴ A child knows his own body before knowing it belongs to him, and only after repeated experiences through which one recognizes ignorance and error,

³⁷³ CP 5.213.

³⁷⁴ CP 5.227.

does the child get to infer that the body that he uses is actually his own, thus reaching developed self-consciousness.³⁷⁵ If, subsequently, self-consciousness does not form ad hoc and disconnected from other ideas, but through a series of inferences, such that cognition about oneself derives from other cognitions, it means that there is an undefined continuity of ideas and that intuition, in the Cartesian sense, does not exist. And if there is no intuition, then there are no intuitive sources of knowledge or a beginning of it either.³⁷⁶

Beside the fact that Peirce denies Cartesian intuition, he also responds to the nominalism emphasized by English empiricism. Nominalism takes “that view of reality which regards whatever is in thought as caused by something in sense, and whatever is in sense as caused by something without the mind.”³⁷⁷ To Peirce’s mind, Berkeley, who enlists in the tradition of the empiricism initiated by Locke, but in a radical manner, brought solid arguments to claim that the “esse of everything is percipi.”³⁷⁸ He shows by this that the reality of something reaches the mind by means of perceptions and what is perceived has a residence at the mental level. Therefore, “nothing that we can know or even think can exist without the mind.”³⁷⁹ If things are as such, then what is not in the mind does not exist.³⁸⁰ Only then does the problem become serious: “Should every mind cease to think it [the material thing] for a while, for so long it ceases to exist.”³⁸¹ Berkeley’s solution, obviously Platonic, consists in holding that a thing exists permanently because it is

³⁷⁵ CP 5.227 – 5.234.

³⁷⁶ Andrei Marga, *Introdurre in Filosofia Contemporana* (Polirom, 2002), 60.

³⁷⁷ CP 8.25.

³⁷⁸ CP 8.30.

³⁷⁹ CP 8.29.

³⁸⁰ CP 8.30.

³⁸¹ CP 8.30.

in God's mind permanently. To avoid the alliance between Platonism and Nominalism, Peirce claims that there are no cognitions that have not been determined by other cognitions. Every idea is a part of an indefinite series of ideas and appears under the form of an inference.³⁸²

2.2.1. The Continuity between thinking and action

I evoked before the way in which the knowledge of the internal world is inferred from the knowledge of the external world; we saw in the previous section the way in which Peirce advocates that cognitions derive from each other, and I will now demonstrate the continuity between thinking and action for Peirce. This is significant because the relationship between mind and behaviour led Peirce to the formulation of pragmatism, which stands for a basic correction of modernity.

Peirce's mindset, related to continuity, unlike Kant's, where two points are intermediated by a third one, or unlike Aristotle's, where each point is a limit between two infinite series of points, is like a line which does not comprise points; these points are only individualised at the level of imagination.³⁸³ The concept of continuity represents a pivotal philosophical theory in Peirce's thinking, called "synechism."³⁸⁴

Peirce highlights the continuity between ideas at the level of only one mind, and also a real continuity between all people's ideas. If the former did not exist, then it would be "impossible for any coordination to be established in the action of the nerve-matter of one brain," and in the second case, there would be no coordination between minds which are external to one another.³⁸⁵ The manner by which ideas are

³⁸² CP 5.215 - 5.224.

³⁸³ CP 6.166 – 168.

³⁸⁴ CP 6.169.

³⁸⁵ CP 6.134.

interconnected is by their association within a more general idea. The fact that there is a general trait of ideas, by which their association is each time possible, highlights the character of the *law* of the association of ideas. The law, represented somewhere else by the third phenomenological category, mediates the evolution of ideas, and this mediation “is an abridged statement of the way the universe has been evolved.”³⁸⁶

A general idea, by virtue of its repetitive character, living and conscious, has the capacity to determine acts.³⁸⁷ “Every action has a motive.”³⁸⁸ And a motive of the highest kind which “will determine what we do in fancy and what we do in action, is called a **belief**.”³⁸⁹ And faith, seen as a judgment according to which man acts ineluctably, “may be discovered by the observation of external facts and by inference from the sensation of conviction which usually accompanies it.”³⁹⁰ This discovery is carried out, therefore, based on the continuity between faith and action. Thus, faith and action are in structural unity for Peirce, and correspond to the idea of synergical relationship in James.

It is also on the basis of this continuity that an object is conceived in accord with the conception that we have about its effects on the behaviour.³⁹¹ The mindset about faith in act led Peirce on the way of formulating his pragmatism.

The continuity among ideas and between ideas and action actually expresses “a law of relationship.”³⁹² As this law has a place only on

³⁸⁶ CP 6.143.

³⁸⁷ CP 6.156.

³⁸⁸ CP 1.574.

³⁸⁹ CP 3.160.

³⁹⁰ CP 5.242.

³⁹¹ CP 5.467.

³⁹² CP 6.172.

grounds of a “theatre of reaction of particles,” which is a physical frame, then the continuity between the idea and action occurs depending on this material theatre of operation.³⁹³ Thus, the link between the inside and the outside is something that belongs to the realm of laws, but also to the material world. These two constituents have been denoted by two out of the three phenomenological categories.³⁹⁴ Based on this mind-body connection, man can request from himself an “ideal conduct” and can polish himself through both “self-criticism” and the constructive critique of his neighbours.³⁹⁵

Not only the continuity between internality and externality but also the substitution of introspection with the capacity of inferring the internal qualities from the external world does in fact shape an epistemological paradigm of correction of disembodied reasoning, necessary for this approach of interpreting a book which energises the mind-action synergism.

2.3. Meaning and action

As there is no law of gravity without the bodily support of matter, or the generality without instances which embody it, in the same way there is no thinking without signs.³⁹⁶ Accordingly, the whole cognitive process is a sign process. Cognition is always formed indirectly, in time, and results after the mediation made by thought-signs. This approach rectifies the Cartesian theory of the immediate and instantaneous cognition. Thinking takes place exclusively on the basis of the signs’ support.

³⁹³ CP 6.212.

³⁹⁴ CP 6.212.

³⁹⁵ CP 1.574.

³⁹⁶ CP 4.551, 5.265.

Now a sign has, as such, three references: first, it is a sign to some thought which interprets it; second, it is a sign for some object to which in that thought it is equivalent; third, it is a sign, in some respect or quality, which brings it into connection with its object. Let us ask what the three correlates are to which a thought-sign refers.³⁹⁷

What Peirce stresses is that the sign is formed out of three inter-related modes of being. In what follows I will pursue these three modes of being of the sign in order to distinguish their specific features and the role they have for interpretation. For an easier understanding we will start from the sign's mode of being as indicator which concerns its object, then we will analyze the sign from the perspective of the relationship with itself, and thirdly, we will see the relationship of the sign with the mind itself. Consequently, a sign is in relationship with an object, in relationship with itself, and can mediate interpretation, namely it generates meaning in its users.

The philosopher expounds this chain of triadic determination, in a slightly altered order. In 1909, when, writing to his friend from the Metaphysical Club, William James, he defines the sign as follows:

A sign is a Cognizable that, on the one hand, is so determined (i.e. Specialized, bestimmt), by something other than itself, called its object . . . while, on the other hand, it so determines some actual or potential Mind, the determination whereof I term the interpretant created by the sign, that the interpreting mind is therein determined mediately by the Object.³⁹⁸

Peirce performs one of the most original changes in the theory of signs, one which makes him the founder of the "linguistic turn" in contemporary philosophy. Knowledge is no longer focused on the direct *subject-object* relationship, but on the triadic relationship of the type *object, sign and the conscious effect* of the object on the knower

³⁹⁷ CP 5.283.

³⁹⁸ CP 8.177.

(interpreting thought) or, in Peirce's terms, *object, sign (representamen) and interpretant*.³⁹⁹ In fact, all three aspects of signification make knowledge a possible process. Thus, knowledge is preeminently *semiotic*.⁴⁰⁰ Peirce argues that logic is, by and large, semiotics.⁴⁰¹

2.3.1. The signifying mode of signs ("a sign for some objects")

The fact that a sign which, by virtue of its aspects, makes us think of an external object or that which replaces an object at the moment of its representation, emphasizes its mode of being as a sign in relation with its object. Peirce uses the terms "representamen" and "representation in order to identify this mode of being of the sign."⁴⁰²

But what exactly does the sign stand for, "what is its suppositum?"⁴⁰³ The sign as "representamen" points toward an outward thing, "when a real outward thing is thought of."⁴⁰⁴ When a sign is determined by an outward thing, the former has a denotative role, and the thing denoted can be an object which confers the sign, the possibility to exist as sign.

Peirce introduces a major referential distinction that singularizes the type of relation between signs and objects to which the sign refers: *dynamical object* and *immediate object*. The *dynamical object* is 'outside the sign', but as Peirce specifies, not in the sense that it is 'out of the mind'. It means something that forces itself upon the mind in the act of perception but which includes more than what perception reveals. The

³⁹⁹ CP 1.541.

⁴⁰⁰ CP 4.551 and CP 5.265.

⁴⁰¹ CP 5.488.

⁴⁰² CP 5.554, 1.480, 1.540, 2.242, 2.305, 2.316, 4.536.

⁴⁰³ CP 5.285.

⁴⁰⁴ CP 5.285.

dynamical object is the “Object in such relations as unlimited and final study would show it to be.”⁴⁰⁵ It is the thing as it is. The *dynamical object*, being the actual cause of the sign, can only be indicated by its sign that leaves “the interpreter to find out by collateral experience.”⁴⁰⁶ The dynamical object directs the inquiry by virtue of its condition as an object that is comprehensible, but still not fully comprised. The dynamic object is the reality found in the semiotic externality of the sign, but which stirs further on the representative or denotative function of the sign.⁴⁰⁷ The sign cannot fully express its dynamic object.⁴⁰⁸

Unlike the latter, the immediate object is “the Object as the Sign itself represents it.” An aspect of the object is lost in the semiotic internality of the sign. The immediate object is the object signified, but partially. Peirce underscores that the *immediate object* is that object which is ‘within the sign.’⁴⁰⁹ Or, it is “the Object as cognized in the Sign and therefore an Idea.”⁴¹⁰ It is a semiotic fragment about the reality of an object, a sort of impression mediated by the sign concerning an external thing. Yet, on another occasion, the philosopher explains that the *immediate object* is “the Object as the Sign itself represents it, and whose Being is thus dependent upon the Representation of it in the sign”⁴¹¹ For example, let us suppose that we are thinking of Toussaint. The first thought that comes to our mind is that of an Afro-American person

⁴⁰⁵ CP 8.183.

⁴⁰⁶ CP 8.314.

⁴⁰⁷ CP 4.536.

⁴⁰⁸ CP 8.314.

⁴⁰⁹ Mats Bergman and Sam Paavola, editors, “A Letter to Lady Welby, SS 83, 1908,” *Immediate Object*, “The Commens Dictionary, Peirce’s Terms in His Own Words,” New Edition, Published by Commens, First Edition 2003, New Edition 2014, accessed September 29, 2014, <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/term/immediate-object>.

⁴¹⁰ CP 8.183.

⁴¹¹ CP 4.536.

("negro").⁴¹² This thought is a "representamen." This sign as a vehicle of knowledge leads our thought to another sign, that of **man**. This subsequent thought can take us to that of **general**, and so on and so forth. Thus, each representamen "denotes what was thought in the previous thought."⁴¹³ And each one of these signs contributes to the representation of the dynamic object of the research constituted by General Toussaint, the black general who defeated Napoleon's army instituting the self-government of black people in Haiti.

This differentiation is important because Peirce distinguishes three types of signs that can be identified in relationship with their dynamic objects. They are Icon, Index, and Symbol.

An "icon" refers to the dynamic object, or is determined by it, by virtue of the sum of its features, or differently put, its internal nature.⁴¹⁴ Peirce remarks the relatedness between the sign's mode of being as index and that of "qualisign" and "sinsign," which are modes of being of the sign independent from a dynamic object.⁴¹⁵ Examples of "icon" are a vision, or a sentiment excited by an artistic event, or an individual diagram, a picture, an imagination. An index is a sign "determined by its dynamic object by virtue of being in a real relation to it."⁴¹⁶ "A rap on the door is an index. Anything which focuses the attention is an index. Anything which startles us is an index."⁴¹⁷ Each index implies a "legisign." A symbol is a sign which is identified with its dynamic object "upon a convention, a habit, or a natural disposition of its interpretant or of the field of its

⁴¹² CP 5.285.

⁴¹³ CP 5.285.

⁴¹⁴ CP 1.372, 1.564, 2.92, 2.247, 8.335.

⁴¹⁵ CP 1.564, 8.335.

⁴¹⁶ CP 8.335.

⁴¹⁷ CP 2.285.

interpretant.”⁴¹⁸ For instance, a name, or the sign of the cross, “any utterance of speech.”⁴¹⁹ Also, every symbol presupposes a “legisign.”⁴²⁰

2.3.2. The formal qualities of signs (“a sign in some respect or quality”)

Another mode of being of the sign is that of signification, not by virtue of all its characteristics as a sign, but on the basis of some peculiar traits of it which make out of it a denotating sign. A quality can be a sign.⁴²¹ This way of signifying an object resides in its independence from a certain object; the sign is not determined by any object at all.⁴²² This modality of being that the sign owns implies the capacity to signify only by virtue of qualities, of concrete facts or a general law like conventions.⁴²³ For example, the feeling of “red” may indicate a rose, as an object of it, but only “by virtue of some common ingredient or similarity;” in our case that of the colour.⁴²⁴ When a quality, as the “red” colour, is associable with an object by virtue of the generality of its colour, then this quality fulfils the role of a sign, and is called by Peirce a “qualisign.” When an actual fact, or an object of the experience, has certain features which “determine the idea of an object,” then those characteristics have the role of sign. This modality of signification is a “sinsign.”⁴²⁵ For example, the smoke, the high temperature of the body and good social conduct are not necessarily signs, but some of their features may make us think about

⁴¹⁸ CP 8.335.

⁴¹⁹ CP 2.92.

⁴²⁰ CP 8.335.

⁴²¹ CP 2.244.

⁴²² CP 2.248.

⁴²³ CP 2.243.

⁴²⁴ CP 2.254.

⁴²⁵ CP 2.255.

the idea of fire in the case of smoke, about fever in the case of temperature and about a set of moral beliefs in the case of good conduct. Smoke, temperature and conduct would thus become “sinsigns.” Moreover, when certain fundamental traits of a thing make reference to an object, given the understanding among people, or of a habit or law, those traits perform the role of sign, by a different kind, called by Peirce “legisign.”⁴²⁶ For example, a proper name can denote a certain person, depending on a convention and a habit. Or the term “word” is a “legisign.”⁴²⁷

2.3.3. The sign in its relationship with an *interpretant*

The thought as sign, in the cognitive stage, is followed by other thoughts, because “it is always interpreted by a subsequent thought of our own.”⁴²⁸ The indefinite series of signs thus contradicts the Cartesian intuition. But, in addition, since any sign is interpreted by the sign it follows, then we are in the situation of acknowledging the sign’s modality of being in relation with the sign that it follows and interprets. As a consequence, the sign has a mode of being in relationship with its object, another mode of being in relationship with itself (independent from any object), and a third one - we have to mention that any sign holds all these three modes of being at the same time - is that in relationship with a successor sign which interprets it. The proper significant effect of a sign in mind is called “interpretant.”⁴²⁹ A definition of the interpretant where the object, the sign and the interpretant are enounced together is the following one: “That determination of which the immediate cause, or

⁴²⁶ CP 2.246.

⁴²⁷ CP 8.334.

⁴²⁸ CP 5.284.

⁴²⁹ CP 5.475.

determinant, is the Sign, and of which the mediate cause is the Object, may be termed the Interpretant. . . .”⁴³⁰

Signs in their relationship with the mental effect that they produce, namely with the “interpretant,” divide into three categories. A sign that determines an ‘interpretant’ by virtue of its qualitative features that it employs about the object that it represents is a “term” or a “rhema.” For example, a predicate without subject, of the type “-marries -to-,” is a “term” or rhema.⁴³¹ When a sign is understood on the basis of an existential feature that it stresses when it signifies the object is a “dicent.” For example, “Chrysostom marries Helena to Constantine.”⁴³² And also, when a sign determines an interpretant determining the thinking to act based on a law or social convention with the purpose to signify its object, then that sign is a “delome.” The example that the philosopher uses the most is the “argument.” This sign “has the Form of tending to act upon the Interpreter through his own self-control, representing a process of change in thoughts or signs, as if to induce this change in the Interpreter.”⁴³³ Therefore, a “rhema” is a vague predicate, without subject, a dicent is a simple sentence, and a delome employs a principle of sequence or inference.⁴³⁴

Since each sign holds three modalities of being, in relationship with its object, with itself and with its interpretant, then each sign can be analysed in terms of its own combination of modes of being. Thus, for instance, a spontaneous cry is a rhematic-indexical-sinsign.⁴³⁵

⁴³⁰ CP 6.347.

⁴³¹ CP 2.95, 2.379.

⁴³² CP 2.379.

⁴³³ CP 4.538.

⁴³⁴ CP 8.373.

⁴³⁵ CP 2.256.

2.3.3.1. The classification of *interpretants*

As the series of thought-signs develops, there are effects of the signs formed in the mind, called “interpretants.” The significational process is no longer dual like in Saussure (where the meaning is given by the relation between *signifier* and *signified*) or intellectualist, in the sense that it reduces meaning to a concept, but it presupposes feeling, the mental and behavioural action, the life of the individual found in a community organized according to laws and conventions. Patrice Guinard also notices that

[t]he inadequacy of Saussurian and post-Saussurian dichotomies (signifier/signified, language/word, denotation/connotation, expression/content, competence/performance . . .) underlies the mistaken discussions that have occupied linguistics in the past and still occupy it today. Intellectual dualism -- intellectual meaning cut off from its roots in the emotions -- through its neutralization of the third dimension of the sign has led linguistics into an impasse.⁴³⁶

Peirce attacks the intellectualist approach of the sign stressing that

a Sign has an Object and an Interpretant, the latter being that which the Sign produces in the Quasi-mind that is the Interpreter by determining the latter to a feeling, to an exertion, or to a Sign, which determination is the Interpretant.⁴³⁷

Interpretants are of three types: “immediate interpretant,” “dynamic interpretant” and “final interpretant.”

The first significant effect of a sign, from the logical point of view, is the “immediate interpretant.” If the sign were a simple sentence of the

⁴³⁶ Patrice Guinard: “Critical Analysis of Peirce’s Semiotics and an Ontological Justification of the Concept of the Impressional,” translated by Matyas Becvarov, (C.U.R.A. The International Astrology Research Center, Matyas Becvarov & Patrice Guinard, 2002), accessed January 15, 2015, <http://cura.free.fr/16peiren.html>.

⁴³⁷ CP 4.536.

type "What sort of a day is it?"⁴³⁸ then "the Immediate Interpretant is what the Question expresses," i.e. it consists in the simple reception of the singular elements of the sentence, such as: number of words, grammar and syntax. Thus, the 'interpretant' of this sign (sentence) of the "dicent" order will represent the existence of a question, and the fact that it is about the issue of the weather outside, and in relationship with the object of this sign, the "Immediate interpretant" is the schema in the imagination or the vague image of the dynamical object which, in this case, is the weather outside.⁴³⁹ It "consists in the Quality of the Impression that a sign is fit to produce, not to any actual reaction."⁴⁴⁰

The second interpretant that appears obligatorily in the series of the signification, in case circumstances are favourable for the continuation of the cognitive stage, is the "dynamical interpretant." The positive perception of the object of the effective sign is a "dynamical interpretant."⁴⁴¹ Or, from the perspective of the sign, a dynamical interpretant is the "effect actually produced on the mind by the Sign."⁴⁴² This is our provisional actual interpretation of the object of the sign under attention.

The *final interpretant* closes the list of *interpretants*. This interpretant "is that which would finally be decided to be the true interpretation if consideration of the matter were carried so far that an ultimate opinion were reached."⁴⁴³ Peirce leads the semiotic undertaking up to the moment when he connects action with life. The sign translated abductively in the sphere of action is a "final interpretant":

⁴³⁸ CP 8.314.

⁴³⁹ CP 8.314.

⁴⁴⁰ CP 8.315.

⁴⁴¹ CP 8.315.

⁴⁴² CP 8.343.

⁴⁴³ CP 8.184.

The Final Interpretant does not consist in the way in which any mind does act but in the way in which every mind would act. That is, it consists in a truth that might be expressed in a conditional proposition of this type: "If so and so were to happen to any mind this sign would determine that mind to such and such **conduct**." By "conduct" I mean **action** under an intention of self-control.⁴⁴⁴

The sign not only renders the object, but also mediates the idea (*the interpretant*) that we have about the object that we analyze from the perspective of the probable actions which flow from the reception of the sign. Therefore, in Peirce, reason and action altogether are essential elements for knowledge and interpretation. Karl-Otto Apel notes the fact that Peirce removes the separation between theoretical reasoning and practical reasoning.⁴⁴⁵ He is part of the philosophers (Existentialists and Marxists) who consider that "philosophy cannot put the praxis of life aside, as if it could first recognize the essence of things through pure, disinterested contemplation and then orient praxis to its theory."⁴⁴⁶

Once the *sign* and the *interpretant* are introduced, the former also being a sign in the equation of knowledge, the American philosopher joins the meaning of a thing with its effect, expressed semiotically, embodied in action and life. Peirce has the merit of having observed that knowledge has a semiotic nature, and this knowledge carried out through the employment of signs engages not only the consciousness of the knowing subject but also its practice, habits and behaviour, not only thinking but also action. This way the meaning of a thing finds out its supreme elucidation in the imagination of its effect upon life. Actually, the fundamental idea of Peirce's pragmatism abides in this very thing because, according to the philosopher, the purpose of the pragmatist

⁴⁴⁴ CP 8.315.

⁴⁴⁵ Karl-Otto Apel, *Charles Peirce: From Pragmatism to Pragmaticism*, trans. John Michael Krois (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Prometheus Books, 1995), 55-56.

⁴⁴⁶ Apel, *Charles S. Peirce*, 1.

dwells in the specification of a “method for ascertaining the real meaning of any concept, doctrine, proposition, word, or other sign.”⁴⁴⁷ Related to the meaning of a sign or clarification of ideas, in 1877 and then in 1878, the philosopher published in *Popular Science Monthly* a collection of six articles among which are also “The Fixation of Belief” and “How to make our ideas clear.” These articles accommodate the formulation of the pragmatic maxim rendered in the following words:

Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object.⁴⁴⁸

In view of the fact that Peirce’s pragmatism is later interpreted differently by philosophers like James, Schiller and Dewey, and continuing with Mead, Papini and Morris, Peirce considers it appropriate to redefine his pragmatic conception so that the latter will become unmistakable and be protected from possible pseudo-reproductions.⁴⁴⁹ Peirce underlines that the meaning of something is given by the interpreter’s manner of being and acting in community. Similar to the sign that cooperates with action in the process of signification, it is also knowledge that becomes twinned with experience and life.

Peirce describes and recognizes the biblical source (Matthew 7:16) of his pragmatism, affirming that

[a]ll pragmatists will further agree that their method of ascertaining the meanings of words and concepts is no other than that experimental method . . . this experimental method being itself nothing but a particular application of an older logical rule, ‘By their fruits ye shall know them.’⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁷ CP 5.6.

⁴⁴⁸ CP 5.402.

⁴⁴⁹ CP 5.438.

⁴⁵⁰ CP 5.465.

Peter Ochs comments on Peirce's quotation, underscoring the teaching of pragmatism in conformity with which the effect of the sign upon the interpretant is not concealed or subjective, but public and visible:

For Peirce, this verse from Matthew is a prototype of the rule of pragmatism that forms communities by defining vague empirical concepts as names for publicly recognizable habits of conduct. The context of this verse is Jesus' admonition to 'Beware of false prophets.' Falsity leads to death! But the Gospel teaches that there is salvation from death: suffering is a sign of coming redemption. The Gospel of Christ, Peirce says, is the rule of love.⁴⁵¹

2.3.4. The background of the perceptual judgments for the probable conception of the practical bearings

Peirce underlines that the complete understanding of a thing is minutely correlated with experienced actions, both actions experienced in the past and the ones in the present, and future. In other words, when the sign affects the mind, it does not come into a virgin place; on the contrary, it is influenced by previous experiences and the probable future. For example, the text that the reader interprets is met and understood on the basis of previous readings and data. The previous experience, of any kind, that influences the act of perception is called by the American philosopher "ponecept," and its abtractization is a "ponecipuum."⁴⁵² Also, beside the fact that the conceived sign is met with interest by the 'inhabitants of memory', it is encountered as well by the hopes and expectations of the near future, which are built according to the logic of probability (if it was likely for me to wake up to a new day yesterday, and I did, and today it is the same, it is likely that tomorrow will be another day

⁴⁵¹ Peter Ochs, *Peirce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture* (Ca.: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 315.

⁴⁵² CP 7.648.

too, that I will be able to live to the full) and predictability. Thus the interpreter is not only influenced by the present perception of a text, he/she is at the same time determined by previous texts (to be read signs) *and* his/her near future.⁴⁵³ The demarcation line between the percept and the near anticipation is difficult to trace.⁴⁵⁴ For Peirce perceptual facts emerge neither from the concrete reality of a text alone nor from the mind alone with all its personal experiences preserved in signs woven with habitually anticipative acts about the future, but from their interaction, mediated by the human propensity to seek meaning and discover sense. The knower's ability to anticipate in a probable manner either inductively or hypothetically what follows, is called "antecipuum," while the act of anticipating, the effect that the text as sign has upon the near future is the "antecept."⁴⁵⁵ The meaning of something, therefore, is not solved in the isolated sphere of thinking, since for Peirce such an isolation does not exist; on the contrary it is intimately connected with actions performed in the past and present, but also with the ones that we want to carry out in the future. The meaning is thus given by the apprehension of the "practical bearings" that the thing observed brings to the fulfilment of the followed purposes. In this case, the interpreter will virtually conceive the benefits of the text on one's own life.

This "one's own," however, is general, because the author does not believe in a subjective and psychological pragmatism such as that of William James, but in one that recalls the fact that the meaning of something is not received differently by its beneficiaries, but it is greeted in the same way by all recipients. As the knowing subject or interpreter is mind and body, the meaning of a thing can encompass, Peirce believes, the value that thing has for its own social conduct. Again, meaning is

⁴⁵³ CP 7.648.

⁴⁵⁴ CP 7.648.

⁴⁵⁵ CP 7.648.

mindfully attached to action, in the same way as mind is sharply correlated with body and life. This mindset is proper for the approach to the Epistle of James which underscores the synergy between the mind's content and the action's features.

Peirce's semiotics fuels an epistemology that places action and life on an equal footing with thinking and reason. Subsequently, Peirce corrects modern epistemology, uniting theory with practice and belief with action. Peter Ochs talks about the Peircean correction of the philosophy of modernity in the following words:

Charles Peirce, founder of the American philosophic movement of pragmatism, offered the first critique of all the philosophies of "modernism" as failed attempts to replace the philosophic-religious systems of medieval Europe with systems of reason, alone.⁴⁵⁶

Hence, pragmatism offers a correction of the modern mode of thinking from the inside, highlighting that knowledge cannot be intuitive and direct, but interceded by signs connected with life.

2.4. The inconceivability of the incognizable and the categories of phenomenology (potentiality, actuality and continuity)

The fourth critique of Cartesianism concerns the consideration - reiterated in modernity by Kant – that the very reality of the world is incognizable. The attack of the American philosopher, Peirce, regarding this topic started with the observation that "all our conceptions are obtained by abstractions and combinations of cognitions first occurring in judgments of experience."⁴⁵⁷ Since the knowing subject has no incognizable experience, then there cannot exist the concept of an

⁴⁵⁶ Ochs, *Peirce*, i.

⁴⁵⁷ CP 5.255.

incognizable absolute either.⁴⁵⁸ For, “whatever is meant by any term as ‘the real’ is cognizable in some degree” means that the real “is of the nature of a cognition.”⁴⁵⁹ Thus, “the absolutely incognizable is absolutely inconceivable.”⁴⁶⁰

According to Peirce, knowledge of external reality should take into account and use the formal elements of “all that is in any way or in any sense present to the mind, quite regardless of whether it corresponds to any real thing or not.”⁴⁶¹ Thus, the cognizable cannot be comprehended as such without the phenomenological categories.

According to the logic of relations, reality is neither monadic nor dyadic but triadic and has to be perceived from a triadic outlook. As Joan Fontrodona says,

[f]rom time to time, Peirce refers to this insistence of his in conceiving all aspects of reality from a triadic viewpoint and points out that it is not due to any cabalistic reasons but rather to his intent to go beyond the dualistic conceptions of modernity (CP 1.355). . . . For Peirce modernity is characterised by dyadic schemes of thought, which account for reality by means of the contraposition of ideas, starting with the Cartesian opposition between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. However, for Peirce, these dualistic interpretations are insufficient to fully account for reality and, therefore, it is necessary to go beyond them by means of a triadic scheme of categories.⁴⁶²

Peirce is convinced that the rationalist method of modernity guarantees neither a unitary understanding of reality nor an undoubted communication of ideas, as this method sums up the formulation of abstract definitions and their approach in a merely theoretical manner.

⁴⁵⁸ CP 5.255.

⁴⁵⁹ CP 5.310.

⁴⁶⁰ CP 5.310.

⁴⁶¹ CP 1.284.

⁴⁶² Joan Fontrodona, *Pragmatism and Management Inquiry: Insights from the Thought of Charles S. Peirce* (Santa Barbara, Calif: Quorum Books, 2002), 41.

The aim of the review of Peirce's phenomenology is to reveal that reason, which is an expression of Thirdness, is neither reduced to nor separated from Firstness and Secondness. It is worth specifying that Peirce criticizes Hegel's 'ideal absolutism' pointing out that the latter gives priority to the category represented by thinking, continuity, relationship, rationality or mind, namely Thirdness, over the other two: Firstness and Secondness. I will attempt to reach this purpose firstly by explaining the manner in which the three phenomenological categories coexist, then, secondly, by showing the fact that the categorical triad denotes that thinking and any brute forms of practice uphold each other without any exclusion or prevalence. Adopting a phenomenological thinking will help us to detach from the modernist reflex of seeing things through the lens of Cartesian dualism or through those of the Hegelian idealism where Firstness and Secondness must be repealed.⁴⁶³ In general terms, Thirdness involves quality (Firstness) and action (Secondness), which means that we cannot have any idea about reason outside the idea of pure action.

2.4.1. Phenomenological categories: composition and definition

Peirce argued – in contrast with the modern dualist thinking - that the phenomenological categories are: "Firstness," "Secondness" and "Thirdness."

In general, "Firstness" denotes qualities of unanalysed feelings,⁴⁶⁴ the idea of hardness,⁴⁶⁵ the readiness in itself,⁴⁶⁶ the *sui generis* flavour of

⁴⁶³ CP 5.91.

⁴⁶⁴ CP 5.66, CP 2.85.

⁴⁶⁵ CP 8.329.

⁴⁶⁶ CP 1.25.

the tragedy of King Lear,⁴⁶⁷ also the word *possibility* suits it,⁴⁶⁸ then originality,⁴⁶⁹ ideas of freshness, life, freedom,⁴⁷⁰ spontaneity,⁴⁷¹ and impression. Firstness also involves the idea of the first absolute or originality,

[i]t precedes all synthesis and all differentiation; it has no unity and no parts. It cannot be articulately thought: assert it, and it has already lost its characteristic innocence; for assertion always implies a denial of something else. Stop to think of it, and it has flown! What the world was to Adam on the day he opened his eyes to it, before he had drawn any distinctions, or had become conscious of his own existence -- that is *first*, present, immediate, fresh, new, initiative, original, spontaneous, free, vivid, conscious, and evanescent. Only, remember that every description of it must be false to it."⁴⁷²

"Secondness" is expressed by any brute action,⁴⁷³ it is the experience of an effort separated from any purpose,⁴⁷⁴ the actuality of an event,⁴⁷⁵ it is existence, an element of occurrence,⁴⁷⁶ it is "relation, compulsion, effect, dependence, independence, negation, occurrence, reality, result."⁴⁷⁷

"Thirdness" is the category of mediation. It is relation, mediation or law.⁴⁷⁸ Thirdness is a medium, a representation, a concept,⁴⁷⁹ it is that

⁴⁶⁷ CP 1.531.

⁴⁶⁸ CP 1.531.

⁴⁶⁹ CP 2.85.

⁴⁷⁰ CP 1.302.

⁴⁷¹ CP 3.422.

⁴⁷² CP 1.356-357.

⁴⁷³ CP 5.469.

⁴⁷⁴ CP 8.330.

⁴⁷⁵ CP 1.24.

⁴⁷⁶ CP 1.532.

⁴⁷⁷ CP 1.358.

⁴⁷⁸ CP 8.331.

kind of law or regular mediation according to which a certain kind of prediction is possible,⁴⁸⁰ it is intelligibility and reason objectified.⁴⁸¹ Thirdness is excellently expressed by a sign,⁴⁸² as Peirce asserts in the following sentence: “The most characteristic form of Thirdness is that of a sign; and it is shown that every cognition is of the nature of a sign.”⁴⁸³

One must say here that these three categories express *modes of being*, but the being or the *phaneroscopic* reality cannot be understood without taking into account that all three modes pertain to it and they exist in an inter-relational way.⁴⁸⁴

2.4.2. Phenomenological categories: interaction and dynamics

Sandra Rosenthal observes that Firstness in relation with Thirdness is “a negative generality or negative continuity in that it does not limit the future as does law (CP 1.427).”⁴⁸⁵ While in relation with Secondness it is “a pure possibility” in the sense that “its being as possibility is not dependent upon its actualization (CP 1.531).”⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁷⁹ CP 5.66.

⁴⁸⁰ CP 2.86.

⁴⁸¹ CP 1.366.

⁴⁸² CP 8.832.

⁴⁸³ MS 914 (Manuscript 914 of C. S. Peirce) in “76 Definitions of The Sign by C. S. Peirce” (The Peirce Group's ARISBE, Arisbe website, last modified by B. U. April 27, 2012), accessed December, 23, <http://www.iupui.edu/~arisbe/rsources/76DEFS/76defs.HTM>.

⁴⁸⁴ CP 8.328.

⁴⁸⁵ Sandra Rosenthal, “Idealism and Elusiveness of a Peircean Label” in M. Bergman and I. Queiroz (eds.), *The Commens Encyclopedia of Peirce Studies*. New Edition, accessed September 29, 2014, <http://www.commens.org/encyclopedia/article/rosenthal-sandra-idealism-and-elusiveness-peircean-label>.

⁴⁸⁶ Sandra Rosenthal, “Idealism and Elusiveness...” accessed September 29, 2014, <http://www.commens.org/encyclopedia/article/rosenthal-sandra-idealism-and-elusiveness-peircean-label>.

Secondness, in comparison with Firstness and Thirdness, is a raw force, blind and unintelligible, which has the function of giving materiality to the law, exposing its reality (underscoring the reality of the Thirdness). In Rosenthal's terms, it is "a mode of behaviour of the concrete qualitative continuum – the mode of behaviour which is characterized by efficient causation."⁴⁸⁷ Therefore, as she says: "Secondness must provide the tool for progressing from the may-be or spontaneity of Firstness to the would-be or potentiality of Thirdness."⁴⁸⁸ Following the same logic of representing categories in relationship with each other, one can show that Thirdness⁴⁸⁹ is the transition from positive generality or possibility (of Firstness) to concrete actuality of Secondness. And Firstness by virtue of its positive possibility or positive continuity facilitates the development of negative possibility or negative continuity of Thirdness (it is negative in the sense that it restrains the diversity of possibilities to one actuality) that aims to give a qualitative direction and a certain form to Firstness, by virtue of the brute actuality of the Secondness.

According to this phenomenological model of interaction we can conclude that the continuity of cognition (thirdness) cannot occur either without the real support conferred by the actual form of the sign (secondness), or without its general possibility (firstness). Reason, as continuous thought, would not exist without the other side of it, which consists in a concrete actuality of the sign, or without its quality of being a sign. Peirce has clearly emphasized that *firstness* and *secondness* cannot be, in contrast with Hegel's outlook, abolished or suspended.⁴⁹⁰ In the same order of ideas, we cannot speak of the way, regularity or purpose of action, without the brute side of its existence and without its quality

⁴⁸⁷ Rosenthal, "Idealism and Elusiveness."

⁴⁸⁸ Rosenthal, "Idealism and Elusiveness."

⁴⁸⁹ CP 5.436.

⁴⁹⁰ CP 5.91.

which provides it with a general profile. In conclusion, there is neither thinking without compulsion and quality, nor action without reasoning (thinking) and possibility. Any reason (thirdness) acts (secondness) in a specific way (firstness), and any action (secondness) emerges with regularity (thirdness) following general conditions (firstness). Thus, there is neither reasoning without brute action, nor brute action that lacks reasoning.

Peirce comes to defend exactly the first and second mode of being (Firstness and Secondness) when he argues in favour of the interaction of the three categories. So, we cannot acknowledge the primordial role of reason or its prevalence over quality and actuality. The phenomenological categories are equal, indispensable and only together do they contribute to the understanding of the being, thus conceived as a monolithic unit. Peirce sometimes ascertains in a suggestive way,

yet if while you are walking in the street reflecting upon how everything is the pure distillate of Reason, a man carrying a heavy pole suddenly pokes you in the small of the back, you may think there is something in the Universe that Pure Reason fails to account for; and when you look at the color *red* and ask yourself how Pure Reason could make *red* to have that utterly inexpressible and irrational positive quality it has, you will perhaps be disposed to think that Quality and Reaction have their independent standings in the universe.⁴⁹¹

Certainly possibility, actuality and law determine us, both at an individual and a cosmological scale, not to confer on reason (be it human reason or the divine law) a prevalent role over being and action, as Hegel, otherwise, does. On the grounds of the coordinates of the triadic phenomenalism, Peirce continues Kierkegaard's reactive critique, who

⁴⁹¹ CP 5.92.

accuses Hegel of the substitution of the determined existence with its concept.⁴⁹²

2.5. Implications of the corrective critique concerning the epistemological argument of modernity

The implications of the corrective critique of Cartesianism, made by Peirce, are multiple, although I will mention only the ones that are relevant for this enterprise. Firstly, the conviction that one can acquire data about the internal world by appealing to external facts, using the instruments of formal logic, confirms the fact that consciousness alone is incapable of explaining to itself its own cognitive contents; that, moreover, we cannot build anything firm, in the area of knowledge, on the evidence of consciousness, without taking into account knowledge of the external world. Therefore, valid knowledge has to be established on the level of the junction between reason and experience. Secondly, the conception of a continuous series of ideas facilitates the understanding of the continuity between belief and action, which contributes to the formation of a way of thinking which is pragmatic, or an interpretative clarification of reality. This aspect of Peirce's thinking greatly helps the approach of an obviously premodern epistle, which remarks itself especially by the indivisible synergism between faith and works. Thirdly, the triadic representation of the sign fundamentally aids the acknowledgment of the fact that the meaning of a thing is corroborated by its clarification in the sphere of action and life. In Peirce, theoretical and practical rationality intermingle, forming the pragmatic rationale. And, fourthly, the phenomenological understanding of the world, which, by its nature, is cognizable, focuses on the equal and indispensable role of each phenomenological category, stressing at the same time the fact that

⁴⁹² Marga, *Introducere*, 22-23.

thirdness, or thinking, involves action, experience and behaviour. Subsequently, thinking is not the decisive factor in the evolution of a being, nor does it occupy a privileged position in relation to a person's materiality or externality. None of the facets of a being can it be conceived without the other one.

As a conclusion to this section, we can say that Peirce confers to the present enterprise the necessary rationality according to which mind and practice are equally regarded from the epistemological viewpoint. Pragmatic reasoning, having the instruments of a triadic semiotics at its disposal, stands for the epistemological fundament adequate for the non-modernist approach to a pre-modern epistle that repeatedly recalls the relationship between faith and action. We must say, however, that the semiotic project of correcting modernity is deprived of a cosmological narration which may make room, in its conception, for the intersection between the elements of the physical world and the transcendent source. The narration of Peirce's "agapic evolutionism," according to which man, as sign, has a finite existence and a passing role, and God is an active and useful reality, does not answer satisfactorily to the essential metanarrative questions of consciousness like: why does the sign exist as a sign; what is the origin and final meaning of the sign?⁴⁹³ A cosmological narration which will correspond to this sort of questions may be capable of making room for the transcendent reality in the immanent order. Without this, the endeavour to correct modernity will freeze in place, leaving the problem of the separation of the transcendent source from the sphere of the physical order insurmountable. So, we have to appeal to a cosmological narration proper to this undertaking of representing the junction between the transcendent and the immanent,

⁴⁹³ CP 6.452, 6.495.

which will both cohere with a semiotic epistemology, and which will be able to continue the correction suggested by Taylor.

3. Transformation Theology – Oliver Davies

Therefore, with the purpose of representing a reasoning which may comply with the unity between thinking and action, and also with the intersection between the transcendent source and the immanent order, in the next section, we will focus on Oliver Davies' cosmological semiotics, which not only claims a triadic semiotic epistemology, but also suggests a cosmological and theological narration where the transcendent reality is present at the core of each event of the physical world order. This narration is the object of a new theological orientation called Transformation Theology, founded, among others, by Oliver Davies.

3.1. Oliver Davies' indirect contribution to the amendment of C. S. Peirce's semiotics

Davies engages in comprehending the semiotics of the pre-modern theology of Origen, Augustine, Thomas and Bonaventure and consequently, he observes that "Pre-modern semiotics, in its fullest and most sophisticated developments, constitutes what we can call today a 'triadic', or 'pragmatic', mode of reasoning."⁴⁹⁴ From this conclusion there is no more but a step to acknowledging that this triadic pre-modern

⁴⁹⁴ Oliver Davies, *The Creativity of God: World, Eucharist, Reason* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 7.

semiotics matches Peirce's American pragmatism.⁴⁹⁵ The discourse of pre-modern Christianity exposes a triadic semiotics and, consequently, a triadic thinking. The resemblance between the triadic nature of the semiotics of pre-modern theology and that of Peirce's philosophy should not surprise us because even Peirce is greatly inspired by the logic of theologians like Augustine, Aquinas, Ockham, Duns Scotus, Paulus Venetus, Laurentius Valla and other pre-modern authors.⁴⁹⁶

As Davies concludes, similarly to Peirce, "Things in the world cannot of themselves be known without signs,"⁴⁹⁷ this makes him accede to generating a re-orientation from within of modern theology, surely from the perspective of triadic semiotics, asking himself a question from the very beginning, a question regarding not so much the functional nature of the sign, which has actually been clear since pre-modernity, but mostly regarding the onto-genetic under-structure of the sign. Asking himself this question, Davies takes over the triadic method of the Peircean pragmatic discourse, on the one hand, but on the other hand he rests loyal to the transcendent-immanent scheme, exhibited by the Christology of pre-modern theology, namely by the paradigm of the embodiment of Jesus Christ. Thus, whereas Peirce, paying tribute to Kant, conceives God as a reality similar to mathematical realities, Davies makes room for the transcendent source within the matrix of immanent things, seeing God as eternally present at the very core of the event in the physical world. By doing this, Davies suggests a solution to the problem of "excarnation" exposed by Taylor, carrying out the two things required by the Canadian philosopher: 1. The remaking of the connexion between mind and action, an enterprise established by Peirce, and 2. The return to

⁴⁹⁵ Davies, *The Creativity*, 8.

⁴⁹⁶ CP 1.6, 1.16, 1.29, 1.444, 1.458, 2.83, 2.166, 2.229, 2.331, 2.434, 2.440, 2.391, 3.430, 3.442, 4.354, 4.465, 5.84, 6.95, 6.328, 6.495, 7.161, 7.395, 8.11, 8.20, 8.208, 8.319.

⁴⁹⁷ Davies, *The Creativity*, 46.

the transcendent-immanent unity. This solution is found in the theological orientation that he calls 'Transformation Theology.'⁴⁹⁸ Thus, Peirce provides the first requirement and Davies completes it by achieving the second.

In what follows, I will present some conceptual aspects pointed out by Davies' theology, which display both the transcendent-immanent unity, and a deep mind-matter relationship. The cosmological semiotics of Davies, along with the Peircean pragmatic reasoning, will considerably help to the outline of a mode of thinking and cosmological orientation, which will not alter James' synergistic concept, but may tally with it, creating an epistemological-cosmological background for the correction of modernity, which would be suitable to the approach of the Epistle of James. In addition, the pragmatic way of thinking will contribute significantly to the accomplishment of the pastoral purpose initially outlined by implementing Scripture's teaching in people's lives, and the cosmological orientation will highlight the real presence of Christ in the concrete act of interpretation.

3.1.1. Theology, science and mind-body relationship

As Davies indicates, Theology and Science are in a tight relationship according to which the former does not adapt to its environment compromising its creed, but it opens itself towards Science, accommodating its conclusions verified with adequate rigor and seriousness. In the work called "Theology, History and Science: Scotus, Eckhart and the Case of Transformation Theology," Davies summarizes

⁴⁹⁸ Oliver Davies, "Introducing Transformation Theology," *Transformation Theology blog*, accessed September 29, 2014, <http://www.transformationtheology.com/what-is-tt.html>.

the relationship between theology and science in four statements which define, to a great extent, this relation developed within three major historical stages (pre-modernity, modernity, and the contemporary period). 1. "Theology is inevitably influenced by science" ⁴⁹⁹ 2. Rationality and the methods of Modern Theology are marked by the response of the humanities to the rise of scientific materialism, ⁵⁰⁰ 3. Theology can shelter new forms of scientific rationalism without being compelled to give up its establishment on the prerequisites of "the transformative life of discipleship." ⁵⁰¹ 4. Contemporary science offers to theology an interpretative model in conformity with which man can look at himself and at the world to which he belongs, according to the image where "mind and body are in continuity with one another." ⁵⁰²

The first two assertions arouse the active link which exists between theology and science. On the one hand science leads theology, to a certain extent, to the understanding and acceptance of its own scientific results, and on the other hand theology can react to some conclusions which do not seem to accord with its fundamental and revelational beliefs. The third assertion explains how much theology can welcome science in the interior of its construction. Mainly, Davies demonstrates, Transformation Theology can house science up to the point where the principle that undergirds its methods of research 'does not contest the place of God or Christ' in the world. ⁵⁰³ Science should be integrated in the structure of faith because its truths are part of 'our own

⁴⁹⁹ Oliver Davies, "Theology, History and Science: Scotus, Eckhart and the Case of Transformation Theology" (Academia.edu), 2, accessed September 27, 2014, http://www.academia.edu/1573260/Scotus_Eckhart_and_the_Case_of_Transformation_Theology.

⁵⁰⁰ Davies, "Theology," 2.

⁵⁰¹ Davies, "Theology," 3.

⁵⁰² Davies, "Theology," 12.

⁵⁰³ Davies, "Theology," 18.

human truth' and especially because science "is integral to how we live."⁵⁰⁴ Contemporary science provides theology with its essential principle of 'fine-tuning,' which conjures an outlook upon our world. Similarly, theology contributes through its revelational sources to the enrichment of a landscape that paints the universe by offering the image of Jesus Christ, the embodied one, dead, risen and ascended to glory, as being fully present in the reality of a finely-tuned and open world.⁵⁰⁵ So, we have the image of an open universe whose creation has started from outside it and continues from within. Jesus Christ's presence in the midst of actual reality amplifies the significance of the world and intensifies the seriousness of our relationship with it.

The fourth assertion underscored by Davies is relevant to undertaking an interpretation of the Epistle of James by the fact that it offers a post-modern model of representing the mind-matter relationship, nourished by the new discoveries from the realm of sciences, from neurology to physical cosmology.

In order to grasp the way in which contemporary science supplies theology with an understanding of the cosmos and ensures it with a "new understanding of ourselves as material form in a material universe,"⁵⁰⁶ Davies surveys the mind-body relationship as it is portrayed by pre-modernity, modernity and the contemporary period.

In the work "Transformation Theology in its Historical Context," Davies stresses again that the unfolding of the theological discourse is somehow dependent on the scientific revolution which precedes it.⁵⁰⁷ In

⁵⁰⁴ Davies, "Theology," 17.

⁵⁰⁵ Davies, "Theology," 18.

⁵⁰⁶ Oliver Davies, "Transformation Theology in Its Historical Context" (www.Academia.edu), 10, accessed September 30, 2014, https://www.academia.edu/1508691/Transformation_Theology_in_its_Historical_Context.

⁵⁰⁷ Davies, "Transformation," 10.

pre-modernity, cosmology is built in conformity with the image of a hierarchical world seen as a cosmic building where the lodgers of the upper floor descend and live unbothered on the lower floor: “the earth is full of powers and intelligences which are no less substances than we are, though they are non-material.”⁵⁰⁸ The “enchanted universe” of pre-modernity prepares the germination of a self-understanding which sees man as a being that lives in interaction with the spiritual world, man being present in a material world deeply penetrated by forces and actions of super-material origin. Here mind and body are in close unity and their relationship is not imagined “as being over and against the world”⁵⁰⁹

In contrast to this perspective, in modernity, science, which is found in obvious extension to the paradigm of Newtonian physics, outlines a mechanistic cosmos, autonomous and closed, where man, as a rational being, attempts to define his freedom in the energetic perimeter of the intellect or mind.⁵¹⁰ The material and mechanistic character of the world represents a danger for a man endowed with conscience, who does not want himself to be a simple and dispensable wheel or a trivial and redundant robot, in a complex cosmic mechanism, and deprived of purpose and destination. In a ‘disenchanted universe’, the only court where man can appropriate his freedom is reason.

Owing to the rise of reason, man focuses on an inner liberty; hence the emanations of thought, namely technological innovations, inventions and even ideologies or dogmas, become prevailing and defining for human aspirations. Thus, according to Davies, knowledge becomes stamped by man’s return towards himself, towards the subject, and the meaning of things is therefore decided in the grand hall of the

⁵⁰⁸ Davies, “Transformation,” 10.

⁵⁰⁹ Davies, “Transformation,” 11.

⁵¹⁰ Davies, “Transformation,” 13.

mind, exclusively by virtue of reason's criteria. In this new picture, "mind and body in their unity stand out over and against the world."⁵¹¹

In thought's impetus to produce technology and ideas in its sphere, *par excellence*, the mind uses all the other elements found in its proximity, body and matter, reserving for itself the exclusive right to control the court of decision and projection. Mind does not 'work together with acts' any more, or with the body on an equal footing, but it employs them with superiority. Davies discloses this perspective in the following words: "But mind controls body in the sense that the body is the instrument of the mind's attempts to bring the material world under its own control."⁵¹² In modernity, the mind occupies a singular place compared with materiality and the world, which determines it to estrange itself from the surrounding world and dominate it; this paradigm in Davies' opinion "presents a subject who is *in* the world and only remotely part of the world."⁵¹³

In post-modernity a new paradigm materializes, which strives to visualize the universe and the self in a different way. This new vision of the world and the self is influenced by what Davies names the 'second scientific revolution' qualified mostly by discoveries in the realm of neuroscience, genetics, evolutionary biology, physics, and physical cosmology. The relationship of the self with the world and with its own body is that of interdependence and indivisibility. The mind cannot move itself off the materiality of the body and the objectivity of the world, placing itself on a platform of competition and prevalence, but it regards itself as a constitutive part of a whole, where it does not only benefit from care of the proximate materiality (body and world), but is itself a part

⁵¹¹ Davies, "Transformation," 11

⁵¹² Davies, "Transformation," 11.

⁵¹³ Davies, "Transformation," 11.

which belongs to the world, from which people benefit equally and concretely; therefore

this new scientific self-understanding prompts us to think of ourselves as being not only *in* the world, as subject, but simultaneously to think of ourselves as being also *of* the world and indeed, more correctly still, as ourselves *being* world.⁵¹⁴

Also, Davies underscores that there is a real continuity between mind and body, and man is characterized not only by one of these parts or by the prevalence of any of them, but by both as they are combined in a unitary and therefore indivisible way. Quoting Francesco Varela, Davies represents the mind-body relationship not as something free-standing, like a computer's hard disk that can be moved from one device to another, but rather like a "software that constantly rebuilds the hardware."⁵¹⁵ The mind rather forms itself together with the body, perpetually enjoying freedom together. This paradigm cancels the opposition and/or predominance of the mind over the body or the world, by replacing it with the relationship of continuity and interdependence, leaving the self to feel and manifest its liberty not 'from a point beyond it' but from the interior of materiality, the freedom of the self being thus *in actu*:

Here we can see that the opposition between materiality and mind has in effect broken down. Embodiment is continuous with world. Mind is still a free domain which is other than materiality, but this freedom is now one which is exercised within materiality and not from a point beyond it.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹⁴ Davies, "Transformation," 12. It is referenced to Francisco J. Varela, *Ethical Know-How: Action, Wisdom and Cognition* (Stanford, Ca., Stanford University Press, 1999), 52-60.

⁵¹⁵ Davies, "Theology," 12.

⁵¹⁶ Davies, "Transformation," 12.

This paradigm, emphasized by Davies, in which the mind-body unity is constitutive, supports our attempt to approach the Epistle which, as we said, is written according to the principle of unity and indivisibility between theory and practice, mind and body, a unity clearly displayed by the 'synergic pairs' previously presented.

The contemporary scientific paradigm can be easily accommodated by Transformation Theology, making room for itself within the original architecture of the divine-human dialogue through Jesus Christ, the one who became embodied in order to bring us salvation and who ascended to glory in view of sustaining all things from the very core of their reality and materiality.

3.1.2. Theology, Sign, Action and Transcendence

Following a semiotic Christian tradition, Davies reaches the basic idea that theology is semiotic. Since man cannot think without signs, the world itself cannot be known outside these.⁵¹⁷ By adopting this semiotic premise, and acknowledging the triadic relation between object, sign and "interpretant," Davies structures his theology within the perimeter of pragmatic semiotics, thus reaching to employ a contemporary modality of discourse in theology.

The theological project that Davies wants to develop in his work is based on the idea that man is not only a reproductive subject who conveys signs and meanings from here to there, but a meta-critical subject who is interested in finding out why signs are as they are (the subject itself being one of the signs, namely its own object) and answering, according to its competence as a free subject, the question

⁵¹⁷ Davies, "The Creativity," 46.

regarding their origin. This last issue finds its adequate answer in the fundamental truth of Christianity, which has biblical roots and has been preserved in tradition for a long time, namely in the truth that Christ is the Word. This truth reiterates and stresses the fact that Christ is, obviously, ‘pre-eminently *sign*’.⁵¹⁸ The revelational truth explains the premise alleged in general by the post-liberal theologians by virtue of which “theology is itself the source of the turn to the sign.”⁵¹⁹ The truth that Christ is the initial and main sign guides Davies to look for the transcendent origin of signs and helps him to reach, without detours, a cosmological semiotics where the sign is taken into account from the perspective of its own ‘ground.’

Davies decides to approach the sign from the perspective of what it represents to its receiver and user, the human being. From this angle, the sign is a *given*, a reality un-produced by man, and a *given* always found in ontological anteriority to man.⁵²⁰ The world, as a complex semiotic whole, can be best understood from the teleological perspective of its role of being “given.” Only when the sign, and the world as a sign, is understood as being conceived and created within the limits of communication can one note the role of the Communicator who precedes communication. In “The Sign Redeemed: a study in Christian Fundamental Semiotics,” Davies underlines that the teleology of the sign reveals the ontological anteriority of its Donator:

– from a Christian perspective – the givenness of the sign resides in the giving of God. As Creator of the world, and of the signs which are the building blocks of the world as aggregate of meaning, God – or the creativity of God – is

⁵¹⁸ Oliver Davies, “Transformation Theology and Radical Orthodoxy” (www.Academia.edu), 1, accessed September 30, 2014, https://www.academia.edu/1458552/Transformation_Theology_and_Radical_Orthodoxy.

⁵¹⁹ Davies, “Transformation Theology and Radical Orthodoxy,” 1.

⁵²⁰ Davies, *The Creativity*, 140.

the ground of the world, the donation of its possibility and the prophetic promise of its fulfilment.⁵²¹

Therefore, the world is a sign, whose fundamental function is to direct its interpreter towards the Donator of its origin.

The world, as sign, or 'world text' and divine 'given,' is a means through which the intelligent receptor is initiated into a knowledge of the triune divine being, complex, active, creative and communicative:

*This means to say that the nature of the sign as referring is held ultimately in the act of Trinitarian address: signs only refer because they are part of a world which is itself constituted as the issue or outflow of an act of communication between God and God.*⁵²²

Subsequently, the world as sign reveals the existence of a Donator of meaning, who precedes and upholds it with compassion and creativity, but who also expedites the utterance, meaning and communication. Thus, God does not bestow upon the world only the incipient and vague function of referentiality, but he offers it the supreme role of a semiotic vehicle of address and a semiotic background of dialogue. In accordance with the Christian cosmological semiotics, the world as sign does not only have a referential function, pointing to the world's place of origin, but it is also the means through which "the divine speech" addresses humankind continuously and intensely.

The strong form of addressivity "occurs where one speaker directly addresses another."⁵²³ Addressivity employs a dialogical relationship, which, being implicitly in language, is explicitly carried out in the concrete relationship between two speech agents.⁵²⁴

⁵²¹ Oliver Davies (2003), "The Sign Redeemed: A Study In Christian Fundamental Semiotics," *Modern Theology*, 19 (2), pp. 219-241, 233-234.

⁵²² Davies, *The Creativity*, 140.

⁵²³ Davies, *The Creativity*, 138.

⁵²⁴ Davies, *The Creativity*, 138.

Davies, dwelling upon God's progressive revelation, directs all the spotlights towards Jesus Christ's embodiment who is the sublime and genuine image of God. By virtue of the world's referentiality, God remains a distant creator of discourse, whereas through the addressivity of Jesus, the Embodied Word, God becomes an intimate partner in dialogue with humankind:

At this point God, who already uses the 'I', enters fully into the linguistic world by himself becoming an embodied speech agent among other speech agents. The hypostatic union entails the full realisation of God in the world as an 'I' and thus also as a 'me', whereby God becomes himself fully the object of others' actions. In the person of Christ, God speaks with us, as we do with him.⁵²⁵

By Jesus' embodiment, the transcendent God redefines the maximum and astounding degree of proximity up to his interpenetration with the created world and with man's life. Davies shows that, by Incarnation, God speaks with us from within the world:

So intense is the mode of divine address here that God speaks with his creation, and with humanity, from the centre of the created order: from within the domain of signs. It is this principle that represents the first principle of Christian semiotics: in the light of creation *through* Christ, the sign which refers can become, must become address as well. Christian semiotics has to take account of the intimate connection between the world as product of divine speech, signifying its source, and the divine speech itself as it breaks through the created order and speaks *with us* directly.⁵²⁶

Once having admitted the referential function of the world as sign, namely the fact that the world is a semiotic invitation to the initial knowledge of the divine creative Agent, characterized both by dialogue and compassion for the world, which is an "outflow of God," we are introduced to a chapter of semiotics that Davies names "Christian cosmic

⁵²⁵ Davies, *The Creativity*, 84.

⁵²⁶ Davies, *The Creativity*, 96.

semiotics.”⁵²⁷ His semiotics has the merit of introducing us to a complete discourse, capable of seeing not only *what* the world is, but also “the way the world is,” because, as he himself underscores, “The failure to take note of the way the world is, is a failure in our reasoning and reflects a descent into an ideological, deluded or simply mistaken frame of mind.”⁵²⁸

According to what has been said so far, one can note several aspects related to the cosmological perspective, Davies’ categories of thinking and the type of rationality used.

Before analyzing each one of them, we have to say that the following two points of his theology aid the present approach to interpret James on two distinct levels. First of all, the cosmology suggested by Davies underlines the conjunction between the transcendent source and the immanent order, carried out by the enrichment of Peirce’s objective realism, with the image of an open universe, created *ex nihilo*, from the outside, and coordinated *transformatively* from the inside; secondly, Davies’ cosmological semiotics, beside the fact that it corresponds to Peirce’s semiotics, by adopting the categorical triad, puts at our disposal a semiotic perspective, adequate for the interpretation of the concrete world and the sacred text, according to which the sign is seen as an instrument of God’s addressivity.

The world as a whole, as well as its constitutive parts, is inhabited and transformed by God from the very core of its concrete order. God Himself confers to this order ontological continuity, physical regularity, progressive transformation and irreversible spiritual finality. The ontological fundament of semiotics, namely the Donator of the sign, is one of the important elements with which Davies contributes to the

⁵²⁷ Davies, *The Creativity*, 147.

⁵²⁸ Davies, *The Creativity*, 179.

project of the paradigmatic repair of modernity. A semiotics which abstracts from the existence of its ontological fundament would fail inevitably and lamentably in repairing the modernist trend of detaching the transcendent reality from the immanent world.⁵²⁹

Nevertheless, this world entails another consciousness in its frame, the human one, which is the receiver of God's addressivity. Given the existence of the human interpretative consciousness, the sign is made by its Donator to have not only the capacity of reference but that of address too. In conformity with this outlook on the sign, God is not only object but also communicator, and the human consciousness does not only use signs, but it is even marked by them.

In conformity with the semiotic triad *object – sign – interpretant*, Davies brings a cosmological semiotics to the foreground, amplified transcendently, which includes the dynamic Creator in its triadic relationship, the sign itself (world/Christ) and its mental effect, encountered by the religious tradition and its prophetic horizon at the intellectual level, so that "every attempt to make sense of and to find meaning in the world of which we are a part, is discovered to be a sharing in the creativity of the divine Word."⁵³⁰ Thus, in a strictly categorical sense, in Davies, any sign has three modes of being: one defined by the relationship with its object, then with itself, and thirdly with the mental "sounds," which integrate the "vocal" life of the person and end up in actions or habits.⁵³¹ So the Peircean semiotic categories are the same in Davies, and can be represented, with slight terminological modifications, in the following triad: object – sign – mental "sounds" (mental effect).

⁵²⁹ In this case, immanence meaning, in Taylor's terms, that closed reading of the material order, according to which there is nothing beyond (cf. Taylor, *A Secular*, 550).

⁵³⁰ Davies, *The Creativity*, 76.

⁵³¹ Davies, *The Creativity*, 102 – 103.

Meaning does not consist of a judgment that rests atrophied and barren in the ivory tower of isolation from life and action, or of the repetitive religious discourse which is detached from the tangible ground of life.

It is very important, though, to notice that the referentiality of the sign is double. The sign, seen from the perspective of its functionality, stays in the place of its dynamic object (in Peirce's terms), while from the cosmological viewpoint - and here is the hallmark of Davies' theology - the sign can indicate its divine Donator, without substituting his presence.

We have to take into consideration that Davies regards the sign both from the formal or immanent perspective, and from the cosmological or transcendent one. Namely, the sign in relationship with itself does not only have semiologic qualities as in Peirce, but it has the capacity to accommodate Christ, found at the very basis of the referential process. Christ mediates referentiality, not in the Platonic manner as in Berkeley, but in a transformational way, watching over the materiality and the continuity of signs and, at the same time, enriching their connotation. From the cosmological angle, Christ gives possibility, corporality and generality to the sign. He, as Creator of the sign, is always at the centre of the significatory event.

Next, the sign is in relationship with the determined mental "sound" (interpretant), not only in that it intercedes in the interpretation, connecting the interpreter with its object, but it offers itself to the divine Donator to be used as a means of his addressivity. This addressive stage of the sign is the way through which the divine speech, as a transcendent source, "breaks through the created order and speaks *with us* directly."⁵³² This is why, "We are addressed by this presence in the fullness of our own

⁵³² Davies, *The Creativity*, 96.

embodied humanity, and in the midst of the complex particularity of our own mortal existence.”⁵³³

As a consequence, through the inhabiting of the sign by the Embodied Word, the Peircean semiotic triad is amplified by its transcendent side. The sign points not only to a dynamic object but to its ontological Donator as well; it is not characterized only by qualities, means of expression and conventions, but it also accommodates Christ, who mediates their reality, and does not have just superficial mental effects, but “sounds,” whose final interpretation materializes in “voices” “realised only in the ecclesial gaze of others.”⁵³⁴ Thus, the triadic relationship between *object, sign and mental “sounds”* has a corresponding, transcendental facet, formed by the *God – Embodied Christ – “mind of Christ” (embodied in the Church)* triad.

The sign therefore has an effect doubled by God’s mediated address. In conclusion, Davies’ semiotic triad is characterised by a double semiotic nature: immanent and transcendent. Davies’ cosmological semiotics supplies the necessary tools for the interpretation of a universe characterized by the creative intersection between the transcendent source and the immanent order of things and thus brings its contribution to rectify from the inside a paradigm which deepens the abyss between the immanent and the transcendent more and more.

As regards the rationality developed by Davies, one can say that it is obviously derived from the categories of his semiotics, according to which the sign is interpreted at the level of feelings, actions and behavioral habits. Davies’ rationale is thus a pragmatic one.⁵³⁵ Taking into

⁵³³ Oliver Davies, “The Universal Christ, A Re-orientation within Christology” (Academia.edu), 2, accessed September 30, 2014, https://www.academia.edu/1086113/The_Universal_Christ.

⁵³⁴ Davies, *The Creativity*, 120.

⁵³⁵ Davies, *The Creativity*, 145.

account that the object signified is always beyond the limits of human comprehension, pragmatic rationality “must always be open to refiguring and renewal, as the real comes into view in our social and cultural contexts in new ways.”⁵³⁶ In essence, pragmatic rationality is established on the basis that the “human interpreter is intrinsic to the act of signifying.”⁵³⁷ According to pragmatic reasoning, theory is not viewed as being separated from action, nor yet intellectual beliefs desynchronized from life and action. If the meaning of the object of faith consists in the practical results that it generates, it means that faith and practice cooperate, which corresponds considerably to James’ synergistic mindset.

Both sides of the sign, formal and transcendent, lead the interpreter to a Christian meaning. This is in fact the role of theology, “to be in service to the true source of Christian meaning, which is the life of discipleship as faith lived out in the daily repeated unity of belief and act.”⁵³⁸

Davies is convinced that theology is a historical discourse meant to comprise in its judgments, ‘at one and the same time’, both history as immanent reality and the transcendent source with everything it encompasses.⁵³⁹ However, the theological orientation endorsed by Davies has the specific capacity to observe transcendence as being localized not in discourse or narration but *in history*, seen not as a discourse about the events occurring in time and space but as a concrete reality, a “place of cause and effect.”⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁶ Davies, *The Creativity*, 185.

⁵³⁷ Davies, *The Creativity*, 30.

⁵³⁸ Davies, “Transformation Theology and Radical Orthodoxy,” 3.

⁵³⁹ Davies, “Transformation Theology and Radical Orthodoxy,” 1.

⁵⁴⁰ Davies, “Transformation Theology and Radical Orthodoxy,” 2.

3.1.3. Scripture, Interpretation and Transformation

Since there is no thinking without signs, theology itself is semiotic. And the double functionality of the sign, that of referentiality and addressivity, makes not only man's theological approach to God but also God's semiotic approach to humankind possible.

God's means of address are varied in their form and diverse in their impact. Beside the signs which indicate God only generally and are a relative and vague address of God to man, such as nature's elements, or historical events, there are signs through which the divine addressivity is special, namely those signs which also have, beside the role of pointing out God in a general manner (natural theology), the function of facilitating God's voice in a specific way, symbolically or literally, as in the case of the Eucharist or Scripture. The fusion of human speaking, in the very exercise of witnessing to God's unfolding presence in history, and revelatory divine speech, confers on Scripture the distinctive feature of being "the creative power of the divine Word."⁵⁴¹ The Word of God indwells the Sacred Biblical texts and expresses himself through them. The immanent plan of the letter and the transcendent one of addressivity resembles, at the level of communication, God's embodiment in Jesus of Nazareth.⁵⁴²

From the viewpoint of the relationship between the text and itself, or of its specific peculiarities, Davies shows that the expressions of God's addressivity are axiomatic and they differ from all the other addressive signs of the world by the fact that they do not only entertain Christ's presence, but are also instituted and generated by Christ for the very

⁵⁴¹ Davies, *The Creativity*, 75, 119.

⁵⁴² Davies, *The Creativity*, 132.

purpose of mediating His presence without however replacing it.⁵⁴³ Scripture, like the Eucharist, intermediates Christ's presence 'to an extreme of plenitude', and sets up "a new and quite unique modality of presence"⁵⁴⁴ without substituting for their Donator and Communicator by its material support.

From the perspective of interpretation, Davies affirms that both the Eucharist and the Scriptural text, as fundamental expressions of divine addressivity, can be tackled interpretatively only by adopting 'the mind of Christ' and a "new way of seeing the world: not as a sphere of reference but rather as divine address."⁵⁴⁵ Davies discerns that the transformation of the body and blood of the Lord takes place subtly, so as to keep their initial material features, but to become, through the guidance of the 'mind of Christ', something more; similarly, the text of the Scripture, which is a literary form, receives further understanding when interpreted with the 'mind of Christ', being conceived as a bearer of God's voice. Since Christ is at the heart of the interpretative process mediating the understanding, then,

[t]he interpretation of the divine will, as expressed in the world, in dreams and in Scripture, is a human activity which is especially associated with the Holy Spirit. Interpretation of this kind entails an element of divine illumination, or intervention, therefore, which draws the individual interpreter more fully into the realm of divine power.⁵⁴⁶

The Biblical body of Scripture contains Christ's Spirit in its letter, thus becoming a sacred space of the conjunction between the transcendence of the Christic presence and the immanence of the literary event.

⁵⁴³ Davies, *The Creativity*, 131.

⁵⁴⁴ Davies, *The Creativity*, 131.

⁵⁴⁵ Davies, *The Creativity*, 130.

⁵⁴⁶ Davies, *The Creativity*, 113.

Guided by pragmatic rationality, Davies underlines that the addressivity of the word fulfils the role of integrating the divine speaking not only into the mind of the assembly, but also into the 'lives of the faithful'.⁵⁴⁷ This aspect reiterates Davies' opinion that the meaning of the text is given by the kind of actions and life which result from the sacred germ of the text. This is why the interpretation of Scripture offers "a celebratory conformity to the life-giving compassion of God that is the ground of the world."⁵⁴⁸ Therefore, the interpretation of the Bible is not an intellectual or theoretical exercise but a dynamic, practical and communal one. Davies manages again to relieve contemporary man (or academic theology) of the extreme case of understanding the text theoretically, helping him to look at it from the perspective of the degree and manner in which it transforms the reader and the ecclesial community from within. This way of understanding the Scriptural text is intimately related to that 'mind of Christ' which explores the core of the text, watching the effects that it triggers in one's own life.

3.2. Conclusions

Peirce's pragmatic semiotics contributes, therefore, to a great extent, to the healing of the division between thinking and practice, bringing meaning at the level of action. In addition, Davies' semiotic cosmology has the merit of bringing the transcendent source once more into the sphere of the physical world order, facilitating an open reading of immanence, according to which the world beyond is conceived as being integrated with immanence in a structural and indivisible manner. The relevance of Peirce's pragmatic semiotics and Davies' semiotic cosmology,

⁵⁴⁷ Davies, *The Creativity*, 129.

⁵⁴⁸ Davies, *The Creativity*, 119.

the former representing especially a way of reasoning, and the latter a theological perspective of seeing the world and life, is considerable from two reasons. First of all, their synthesis fulfils, to a great extent, Taylor's task of correcting the paradigm of modernity, and secondly, this equips the interpreter with a rationale which sees reason and action as a unitary whole, and then supplies it with a number of semiotic tools of interpretation, focused on the phenomenological categories, which bring light upon the contents of the text, then upon the way in which the latter becomes a vehicle of divine addressivity and, finally, upon the meaning that the text has from the perspective of the life and future events.

The pragmatic reason established on semiotic, cosmologic and theological grounds, corresponds to Hebrew thinking where faith is seen in close connection with works, and the truth about somebody is perceived by means of the works that person performs.⁵⁴⁹ This, certainly, does not appear to be curious at all as long as the founder of pragmatism admits that this type of rationality was earlier used by Jesus of Nazareth. The pragmatic and cosmological semiotics resulting from the conjunction of Peirce's philosophy and Davies' theology will help the interpreter of the Epistle of James be sensitive to any deviation from the synergic perspective according to which thinking is one with practice and faith is one with action. The way in which semiotics contributes to the profile of a new methodology of interpretation represents the object of the next chapter.

⁵⁴⁹ Davies rightly notices that "It is Peter Ochs who has so importantly drawn our attention to the alignment between a pre-modern scriptural hermeneutic (in this case a rabbinic one) and contemporary pragmatics." in Davies, *The Creativity*, 8.

Chapter III

Methodology

As I have previously concluded, the semiotic-cosmologic rationale, as an outcome of the synthesis between pragmatic and cosmological semiotics, does not only offer a non-dualistic manner of thinking, but also a good number of interpretative tools. Thus, I consider it necessary, besides adopting a way of thinking, to sketch a method which will help us in the process of approaching the Epistle of James in light of its synergic pairs. Since semiotics, as a way of thinking, implies the union between theory and practice, then the understanding of the meaning of a text cannot be left to a study detached from practice and life; on the contrary, the interpretation of a text requires the adoption of a method which will protect the interpreter from inclining to study theoretically, providing him with a path of conceiving the text from the angle of its practical relevance. We have to specify here that the unity between theory and practice implies the structural unity of mind and body which Davies discussed above. According to this mind-body unity, the freedom of the human agent is exercised from within his/her materiality. Man's freedom in act is laid in God's service in accordance with the continuous orientation of divine addressivity.

We follow the differentiation that Peirce makes, passingly, between a way of thinking and a method of thinking. The former implies an articulated system of thought, whereas the latter involves a series of stages necessary to reach certain results.⁵⁵⁰ The first one is deductive and takes the general as its point of departure, whereas the second one is

⁵⁵⁰ CP 8.206.

inductive and envisages the explanation of the particular. Otherwise said, the semiotic manner of thought is not only characterized by a type of sensibility which makes it easy to observe the prevalence of reason over actions in the writings marked by modernity, or the synergism between thinking and practice where necessary, but it even holds some elements which can contribute to the sketching of some stages that aid the interpreter to grasp what he observes.

1. Integrative semiotics

In the following pages I will present a methodology of approaching a text, in general, and of the Epistle of James, in particular, taking into consideration the conjunction between Peirce's pragmatic semiotics and Davies' cosmological semiotics made in light of Peirce's phenomenological triad.

This conjunction allows for the articulation of an integrative semiotics, which comprises three stages: the first one is that in which the text is a complex of signs which stands for the interpreter's object of study; the second stage regards the text as a complex of signs which aids the interpreter with the divine address; and the third one is that in which the interpreter himself is a sign for himself, when he conceives the text by its effects upon his entire being, both in the present and the future. In other words, integrative semiotics presupposes the interpretation of the text as sign, then of the text as a means of divine address, and then of the text as a means of pragmatic-integrative self-reflexion. The relationship between the three stages is complementary.

1.1. *The text as a compound of quantitative signs*

This stage of interpretation is centred on Peircean semiotics. Even though Peirce reserves incredibly little room for the interpretation of the text, the general conception of the semiotic interpretative logic can be transferred particularly to the interpretation of the Biblical text.

1.1.1. General applications of the quantitative semiotic categories: vagueness, singularity and generality

Any sign may be regarded, simultaneously, as singular, vague and general.⁵⁵¹ Based on phenomenological and logical truth, Peirce considers that the vagueness, singularity and generality of a sign “are, from a formal point of view, seen to be on a par.”⁵⁵² It is vague in the sense that it is indeterminate. And the sign remains vague as long as it remains indeterminate.⁵⁵³ The vagueness of a text is identical with that of the image we have about an event which has been announced but is unspecified.⁵⁵⁴ In Peirce’s words

A sign that is objectively indeterminate in any respect is objectively *vague* in so far as it reserves further determination to be made in some other conceivable sign, or at least does not appoint the interpreter as its deputy in this office. Example: ‘A man whom I could mention seems to be a little conceited.’ The suggestion here is that the

⁵⁵¹ I owe my introduction to the Peircean concept of *vagueness* to Phillys Chiasson’s work, called “Peirce’s logic of vagueness” (Phillys Chiasson, Digital Encyclopedia of Ch. S. Peirce, first published: January 2001, content last modified: January 2001, “Peirce’s Logic of Vagueness,” Joao Queiroz, Richardo Gudwin, eds., accessed September 30, 2014, www.digitalpeirce.free.unicamp.br/peichi.htm).

⁵⁵² CP 5.506.

⁵⁵³ CP 5.506.

⁵⁵⁴ CP 5.505.

man in view is the person addressed; but the utterer does not authorize such an interpretation or any other application of what she says. She can still say, if she likes, that she does not mean the person addressed.⁵⁵⁵

Or in more formal explanation, *vagueness*, an inescapable mode of being, is ascertained when we *cannot* apply the principle of contradiction (“**A** is not not-**A**”) to a sign.⁵⁵⁶ In other words, a sign is *vague* for it is not determined yet, or it is “without identity.”⁵⁵⁷ When we envisage, before any examination, the understanding of the *dicisign* “the twelve tribes,”⁵⁵⁸ by virtue of the fact that we cannot imagine exactly, based on the character of the sign, the object to which it refers, this sign is *vague*. Unlike the *general* aspect of the sign, which evokes overall characteristics, the *vague* aspect of the sign shows up when its qualities are not enough to determine or grasp its object. Thus, the sign can mean anything. From this point of view, *vagueness* is a potentiality, a possibility, and represents the first phenomenological category called Firstness.

The character of indeterminacy remains a continuous feature of a sign, but only because the knowing subject can never reach the absolute knowledge of a sign and its object. Nonetheless, the degree of *vagueness* of a sign changes considerably after the determination of the sign. Peirce explains this by pointing out that each fact is germinated and develops within an event. Our incapacity to comprehend the event within which a certain thing takes place leads certainly to the incomprehension of the thing itself. The higher the lack of knowledge, the more we realize that we are not even able to know or imagine its *occurrence* in all its complexity. However, by research, the degree of complexity of the event diminishes, and together with it the degree of sign’s *vagueness*. The existence of any

⁵⁵⁵ CP 5.447.

⁵⁵⁶ CP 2.593.

⁵⁵⁷ CP 5.448.

⁵⁵⁸ James 1:1.

object is due to a multitude of circumstances whose complexity cannot be entirely comprehended, therefore, we can say that the human individual can know things, but not entirely.⁵⁵⁹ According to Peirce, the hope of full knowledge belongs only to an “unlimited” or “indefinite” community of inquirers, which is “without definite limits, and capable of a definite increase of knowledge.”⁵⁶⁰

The second mode of being of the sign is that of singularity. Singularity implies the mode of being as something in particular, word, sentence and phrase or the syntactic constituency. It “offers no range of freedom to anybody who may undertake to represent it, and secondly, that it reserves no freedom to itself to be one way or another way, taken together”⁵⁶¹ This mode of being corresponds to the second phenomenological category, secondness.

The third mode of being of the sign is that of being general. Generality, by its function, lets the interpreter search for and discover the category or class of things to which the sign’s reference pertains. Subsequently, as Peirce points out, a general sign “surrenders to the interpreter the right of completing the determination for himself.”⁵⁶² These general signs, beside singularities or clearly determined signs (simple words or sentences observed in the text) are the material with which our faculties of judgment operate. A general sign is characterised by the fact that we cannot apply the principle of the Excluded Middle to it. If according to this principle “everything is either **A** or not-**A**”⁵⁶³ and this principle does not apply to a general sign, then a sign of this kind is not seen as a particular thing but as a general principle, image, or something

⁵⁵⁹ cf. Chiasson, “Peirce’s Logic of Vagueness”.

⁵⁶⁰ CP 2.654, 5.265, 5.311.

⁵⁶¹ CP 7.625.

⁵⁶² CP 5.505.

⁵⁶³ CP 2.593.

that mediates the order required by laws. The function of a general sign resides in the *discovery* or *detection* in which it participates.⁵⁶⁴ This mode of being corresponds to the third phenomenological category: thirdness. Thus, the text may be regarded under three aspects: vagueness, singularity and generality.

1.1.2. Functional considerations of the sign, under all three quantitative categories

The initial moment of a text's understanding starts from observing its "singularities," namely, words and their repetitions at the level of a section of text and syntax. No singularity (or determinate),⁵⁶⁵ that is to say the textual element that a text holds in its intimate fabric, says everything about its object (of singularity). For instance, the *dicisign* "Jesus is the Lord" states something about Jesus, but the word "the Lord" somehow remains fuzzy (especially for the reader raised in a culture fuelled by presidential principles), because that simple sentence does not tell us what kind of Lord Jesus is, or with regard to whom exactly he is Lord, etc. If the research stopped at this stage, then the interpretation would be defective and superficial.

Consequently, we have to admit that any text has a high degree of vagueness, and the role of the interpreter is to diminish as much as possible the degree of vagueness that the text relates to the interpreter himself.

The very question concerning a more profound comprehension of the text can represent the moment of removing the 'veil of ignorance',

⁵⁶⁴ CP 2.430.

⁵⁶⁵ CP 5.450.

which contributes to the vagueness of a text considerably.⁵⁶⁶ If a sign under a general aspect gives the impression that it says something without however saying everything, a sign under its vague aspect does not say anything; it is an excessive abundance or complexity, in the sense that it surpasses our power of comprehension.

We have to underline here that the vagueness of a sign is not a sterile aspect of it; on the contrary, by the fact that it is constantly infused into the intimate fabric of each sign (or text), it indirectly conveys the idea that there might also be things that we do not know (it involves the idea of *possibility*). Now the interpreter has two options: either vagueness will be perpetuated indefinitely, in case he/she is content with the piece of information insufficiently offered by the sign, resting with unverified beliefs concerning the sign's object, beliefs called by Peirce "acritically indubitable,"⁵⁶⁷ or – according to the fact that he/she presupposes that there are some things that are not known yet about his/her object of study – the interpreter's curiosity will be stirred up so that it will make him/her initiate the process of finding out some novelties regarding the sign, trying afterwards to explain that sign which drew his/her attention, called by Peirce a "surprising fact."⁵⁶⁸

Due to the fact that vagueness denotes the modality of the sign of being unknown entirely, and ignorance is an uncomfortable condition, the singularity, for example, the *dicisign* "the twelve tribes" or "Jesus is Lord" can be the first stage towards knowledge. We must specify that vagueness shows up only when what is known is criticised and examined in view of reaching some extra-knowledge.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁶ CP 1.172.

⁵⁶⁷ CP 5.446.

⁵⁶⁸ CP 5.189, 6.469, 7.36, 7.37, 7.42, 7.218, 7.220. cf. Chiasson, "Peirce's Logic".

⁵⁶⁹ CP 5.523.

The process of diminishing the vagueness of a text must start by observing the text under the aspect of the ‘singularities’ it contains. The observation of the singularities is accomplished based on the process called “hypostatic abstraction.”⁵⁷⁰ Through this process, a sign is analysed by virtue of its formal structure and not of its function of representation, which means that the sign is mentally abstracted from the text and is analysed by abstraction from the fact that it refers to its object. The singularities of a text lie in all its peculiar elements, all the observable parts which form it, and certainly, which make it different from other texts, in the same way as the peculiarities of a triangle make it different from other similar geometrical shapes.⁵⁷¹ This singularity does not supply the interpreter with any freedom to intercept this term. It is accepted as it is given.⁵⁷² Singularity mainly recalls a formal element which can be noted, analysed and counted: “such as any single word in any single sentence of a single paragraph of a single page of a single copy of a book.”⁵⁷³ Singularity under its quantitative aspect, which means more singularities connected with each other in serial relationships, provides the progress of interpretation.⁵⁷⁴ In order to know or explain those text elements, Peirce considers that we have to appeal to generalization, namely to abstract the word from its particular context (its singularity) and then to think of it in light of its generality, of the class of things it denotes. For example, when we discriminate the word “black” in the sentence “This stove is black,” and we think of a general attribute as “blackness,” we make a “pure abstractization” or generalization.⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷⁰ CP 4.235 and 4.549.

⁵⁷¹ CP 5.299.

⁵⁷² CP 7.632.

⁵⁷³ CP 8.347.

⁵⁷⁴ cf. CP 2.363, 5.143, 7.140.

⁵⁷⁵ CP 1.551.

In fact, Peirce thinks that any sign is general.⁵⁷⁶ A general sign has a nature of continuity, so it is characterised by the connection with other signs.⁵⁷⁷ The role of generalization is to create connections with other general signs. These, in their turn, by the connection already formed, can open new horizons for understanding the sign in its own context. Given that there is no state of pure singularity, that is to say isolation, but all things are part of an indefinite continuum, the sign must be seen in light of the fact that it is a general and continuous sign, in other words it is part of a series of signs and can be explained through its relationship with other signs.⁵⁷⁸

The generality of the sign, by the fact that it facilitates the link with other signs of the same class, aids the infusion of information necessary for understanding the object of the sign that the sign alone does not possess. They are like a scaffold which helps the construction of interpretation to advance. When the sign does not convey, by itself, enough data (does not generate *interpretants*) about its object, it has to be considered in its continuity with other signs. In this sense, the sign's generality allows us to spot other qualities and other signs found in its real proximity to which it can relate naturally. Its generality eases our observation of a connection with the adjacent signs or with the words in the context.

Phillys Chiasson exemplifies the manner in which, in the interpretative exercise, generality brings light upon singularity, lowering the sign's degree of vagueness considerably.⁵⁷⁹ I will reproduce her example concisely, as follows: Joe Smith notices a hand-made statue,

⁵⁷⁶ CP 8.20.

⁵⁷⁷ CP 4.171, 7.535.

⁵⁷⁸ cf. Peirce's theory of synechism which evokes the things and reality's uninterrupted continuity.

⁵⁷⁹ Chiasson, "Peirce's Logic".

among other artefacts on display at his neighbour's, Ralph. The statue stands for a naked woman. This icon, seen from the angle of its singularity is nothing more for Joe than a "statue of a female form." If Joe does not question himself about the real meaning of this icon, then he rests at the level of a firm but unverified conviction, "acritically indubitable," which will make him remain rooted in an insufficient and defective interpretation. Things start to clarify from the moment when the icon under examination is seen from the outlook of its generality, when the statue is mentally represented by a general idea (e.g. a female naked form). As we know from Peirce, a general idea is something to which we do not apply the principle of the Excluded Middle. The general character of the sign is rendered by the fact that the referent can be "any, every, all, no, none, whatever, whoever, everybody, anybody, nobody."⁵⁸⁰ Thus, the concept of "naked woman," by virtue of its generality, may entail in its grouping *any* idea of an artefact representing a naked woman, namely it refers to any object which owns these traits. The profound significance of the icon has still remained indeterminate so far, so it remains vague. But if, by virtue of the function of generality, which surrenders "to the interpreter the right of completing the determination for himself"⁵⁸¹, Joe thinks about the general concept of "naked woman" in conformity with which he gets to the point of associating the general idea with the idea represented by the statue of Ashanti fertility, then Joe can conclude that the hand-made work of the form of a naked woman on display is an African Ashanti artefact that represents the Ashanti earth goddess of fertility.⁵⁸² Therefore, a sign by means of its generality can lead to other similar general signs of the same class, creating connections with other signs, thus increasing significantly the amount of data which could be

⁵⁸⁰ CP 2.289.

⁵⁸¹ CP 5.505.

⁵⁸² Chiasson, "Peirce's Logic".

relevant for the understanding of the sign itself and, implicitly, for the diminishing of the degree of its vagueness.

1.1.3. Functional considerations of the sign in light of the formal logic

As I have showed in the previous section, when we encounter a sign under the aspect of its generality, for example “the twelve tribes” in James 1:1, and we infer, on the basis of its resemblance to the (general) idea of the existence of the twelve tribes of Israel, that this idea, “the twelve tribes,” originates in the Jewish culture, we actually perform an abductive inference. The abductive inference is best diagrammed by Peirce as follows:

Rule.--All the beans from this bag are white.

Result.--These beans are white.

∴Case.--These beans are from this bag.⁵⁸³

Abduction is that logical procedure which orchestrates a conjecture. Abduction “merely suggests that something *may be*.”⁵⁸⁴ Its primary role is to open the path to knowledge, being the first major logical-formal enterprise of diminishing the vagueness of the sign. According to the example above, when we take into account that “the twelve tribes” refers to a community with a Hebrew ethnos, then the language, the examples used by the author and the idioms in the epistle are seen as making sense.

⁵⁸³ CP 2.623.

⁵⁸⁴ CP 5.171.

The technical account of abductive inference can also be illustrated by what Peirce calls an “explanatory hypothesis.” This procedure has the purpose of introducing any new idea.⁵⁸⁵ It is meant to discover details about the sign. This logic can be expressed as follows: “The surprising fact, C, is observed; But if A were true, C would be a matter of course, hence, there is reason to suspect that A is true.”⁵⁸⁶ For example, “a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ”⁵⁸⁷ is the “surprising fact.” In Jewish culture, God has the appellative of “Lord.” Yet, when we consider that Jesus is “lord,” in the sense of the appellative of God in the Old Testament, we make a hypothesis which accounts for the reason why the author joins Jesus to God, when he introduces himself as servant both of God and of Jesus Christ in the introductive verse of the epistle. If, therefore, we admit that Jesus is “lord” in the way in which God is “lord,” in conformity with the sources of the Old Testament, and not in the sense of a feudal tenant, then the placing of Jesus Christ as “Lord” beside God, in James 1:1, “is a matter of course.”

The hypothesis facilitates the starting up of the research, but regardless of the hypothesis’ result, it has the role of reducing vagueness. If the hypothesis’ result is invalid, then the vagueness of a sign diminishes, as we will know what exactly that sign is *not*, and if the result of the hypothesis is confirmed by careful enquiry, then we will know what that vague sign represents.

1.2. Final considerations

The text is a semiotic structure with respect to which the interpreter places himself on different sides of the sign, in order to

⁵⁸⁵ CP 5.172.

⁵⁸⁶ CP 5.189.

⁵⁸⁷ James 1:1.

decipher the meaning in a holistic way. In conformity with the previous exposition, one can show that Peirce's semiotics approaches the text, as sign, from four different perspectives. Firstly, the text, although it is a continuous textual unit, may be analysed on the basis of its singularities, namely of words and expressions (qualities), number of words (quantities), syntax (relations), etc. From the angle of a correct approach of singularities, the text does not confer on the interpreter either the freedom of adding something to the text or the handiness of removing something from it. The fact that the singularities of a text are unitary fragments or elements of a textual continuum determines the interpreter to approach the text without the scepticism (attributable to Cartesianism) characteristic of form-criticism. On the contrary, it grants the text the presumption of being entirely clear, if not now then tomorrow, if not to me than to others. Peircean semiotics is in its nature an optimistic approach, yet not one deprived of rigour. This aspect represents one of the differences of semiotic study from Dibelius' form-critical study. Secondly, the text has a vague character, which arouses the interest of the interpreter in the research. There are always things which can be discovered, regardless of how much time and energy was previously sacrificed for its understanding. The vagueness (complexity) of the text creates the premise of interrogation and continuous research and even of cooperation within the research. Thirdly, the generality of the text, namely the raising of the sign from its particular case to the level of concept or general idea (an eminently discursive procedure), eases the interpreter's job of observing relatedness among ideas, facilitating the access to probable explanations and the claim to sufficient meanings. Observing the propinquity among ideas is important because "the meanings of words ordinarily depend upon our tendencies to weld together qualities and our aptitudes to see resemblances, or, to use the

received phrase, upon associations by *similarity*.”⁵⁸⁸ And fourthly, the emphasis of the typical abductive inference shows us, on the one hand, that the first step in the research is always abductive, and this step has to be carried out in order to reduce the degree of vagueness of the sign; on the other hand, the familiarization of the interpreter with this type of inference will help him grasp the fact that abduction must not be mistaken for certainty, and that abduction has to be completed and verified rigorously and continuously.

Vagueness, singularity and generality as quantitative semiotic categories⁵⁸⁹ may be arranged, following the phenomenological categories, in the table below:

Table 2. The quantitative stage⁵⁹⁰

Phenomenological categories/sign	<i>The sign under its quantitative aspect</i>
Firstness	Vagueness
Secondness	Singularity (singleness)
Thirdness	Generality

⁵⁸⁸ CP 3.419.

⁵⁸⁹ CP 5.450, 2.584, 4.42.

⁵⁹⁰ The quantitative triad table overlaps with the table of Peirce’s categories given on Wikipedia: “Charles Sanders Peirce,” Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Sanders_Peirce (accessed August 6, 2015).

2. The text as a means of divine address

Transformational Methodology

If Peircean semiotics, as depicted above, sheds light on the text under the quantitative or material aspects, Davies' Cosmological semiotics unravels the 'ground' of the text, putting God in the foreground as the semiotic, primary and creative agent of the sacred text. In this sense, in conformity with the phenomenological triad, the text is inspected from its three modes of being: 1. that of pointing to God, an aspect unveiled by the Daviesian concept of *referentiality*; 2. that of facilitating the divine act of address, a mode of being expressed by *addressivity*, in Davies' terms; and 3. the text seen *creatively* as that which is transformed (or carried) by the action of Christ and the Holy Spirit into thinking and acting habits.

2.1. Referentiality

Davies reiterates, in conformity with the principles of Semiotic Cosmology, that the cosmological paradigm of God's presence 'within creation' establishes the parameters for a clear understanding of language, world and sign.⁵⁹¹ Creation, Davies underscores, is through the divine Word.⁵⁹² We can infer God's existence starting from the careful observation of this 'finely-tuned universe.'⁵⁹³ The divine speaking, on the one hand, determines the birth of the world in all its complexity, but on the other hand, it creates the divine-human dialogue establishing in this sense some 'spatiotemporal parameters' whose goal is to facilitate the

⁵⁹¹ Davies, *The Creativity*, 95.

⁵⁹² Davies, *The Creativity*, 137.

⁵⁹³ Davies, "The Sign Redeemed," 228.

divine proximity and revelation.⁵⁹⁴ Humankind can receive the divine speech through this proximity and can also participate in it.⁵⁹⁵ But this communication is possible by virtue of the reality of signs and their competence to refer to something for an interpreting agent.⁵⁹⁶

Davies affirms that the sign has a double referential function. Firstly, the sign has another semiotic entity as direct referent, namely another sign which also has another referent or sign which indicates in turn another sign and so on, participating in the indefinitely large constitution of a referential web complex which, as Davies mentions, “grounds our experience of and participation in the world.”⁵⁹⁷ The type of referentiality which is characterized by the sign’s capacity to point to another sign and thus participate in an entire web of referential connections is called by Davies ‘world constituting reference’, and is named as “the secondary referential function of the sign.”⁵⁹⁸

The first referential function of the sign resides, however, in the contribution that the sign has when it indicates its Creator and originary user, the same way as an effect points directly towards the cause that generates it.⁵⁹⁹ When pointing beyond itself towards the divine Speaker, the sign does not highlight itself, substituting itself for the object of its reference, but it leads the interpreter to God as it makes itself both a bridge over ignorance and opens the way to the Creator God. This referential function is suggestively called by Davies a “form of self-emptying,” remembering Christ’s sacrificial kenosis, in which he renounced his glory in becoming a man. Just as the world that withdraws

⁵⁹⁴ Davies, “The Sign Redeemed,” 222.

⁵⁹⁵ Davies, “The Sign Redeemed,” 222.

⁵⁹⁶ Davies, “The Sign Redeemed,” 227.

⁵⁹⁷ Davies, “The Sign Redeemed,” 227.

⁵⁹⁸ Davies, “The Sign Redeemed,” 227.

⁵⁹⁹ Davies, *The Creativity*, 138.

from the focus of our attention, pointing back to the divine Creator, thus proving its instructional function, the sign draws the interpreter's attention to itself only to the point of opening the path to the unique story that it promises,⁶⁰⁰ and all of these because "signs are always overshadowed by the entity to which they point"⁶⁰¹ As a consequence of it, the divine text, as a sacred and complex web of signs, does not replace its divine creator to whom it points, but enables us to reach him.

The sign under its kenotic aspect, that of self-emptying, encapsulates the truth of God's compassion displayed by the two Testaments and understood as "the self disclosure of God to his people."⁶⁰² The Scriptural text, by virtue of its referential function, directs the reader's attention further towards God who spawns speech creatively, fulfilling the role of "icon of the divine creativity," offering the communities who enter the world of the text by the act of deep reading "a celebratory conformity to the life-giving compassion of God that is the ground of the world."⁶⁰³ Therefore, under the referential aspect, Scripture becomes the means of knowing God and of the embodiment of God's compassion in the reader's daily life. The Scriptural text, by its referentiality, gives to the reader an image of God, an incomplete one of course, but one which constitutes, with certainty, the starting point of representing the divine profile generally but sufficiently. Davies talks about the biblical text as a composition of human voices, not only one, which captures the pure reality of God's speech in the Bible.⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰⁰ Davies, *The Creativity*, 138.

⁶⁰¹ Davies, "The Sign Redeemed," 228.

⁶⁰² Oliver Davies, *A Theology of Compassion: Metaphysics of Difference and the Renewal of Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 252.

⁶⁰³ Davies, *The Creativity*, 119.

⁶⁰⁴ Davies, *The Creativity*, 119.

Any text in the Bible that must be associated with another text in order to complete the object of its representation is found in the condition of its vague modality.⁶⁰⁵ So, on the basis of this fragmentary referentiality,⁶⁰⁶ the text can occupy, in the first instance, any place in the integral image of God's reality of speech and his character. For this reason, the referentiality of the text, seen from the perspective of its sequentiality, incompleteness or vagueness, exhibits the text in its mode of being as Firstness. The Biblical text, under the aspect of its vagueness is a firstness.

2.2. Addressivity

Davies notes that

[a]ll linguistic signs combine a referential with an addressive function, whereas natural signs (which is to say, objects in the world) are rarely said to address us in any way. Within Judaeo-Christian tradition, however, natural signs can also be addressive since they are understood to be constituted by the divine speech (cf. the Hebrew homonym *dabar-dabar*, meaning both 'thing' and 'word').⁶⁰⁷

The addressive function of the text or of the sign, regarded from the angle in which both the text and the sign are part of a 'free-flowing aggregation of all possible signs', comes up only if we take into account God's reality

⁶⁰⁵ The referentiality of the biblical text can be inscribed in the categorical class named by Peirce *Secondness* and not in that of *Firstness*, as an element which is a Firstness is that mode of being which is without any reference to anything else (CP 8.328). Nonetheless, the fact that a fragment of a Biblical text, despite its clear referentiality, is not sufficient without the link to a similar text, determines us to consider it vague and include it in the first phenomenological category. The recognition of the vague referentiality of the text fragment determines the reader to group together all the biblical texts, called by Oliver Davies 'human voices', so that 'the reality of the divine speaking in history', about which the theologian talks, might be visualized as much as possible in its integral form.

⁶⁰⁶ Davies, *The Creativity*, 119.

⁶⁰⁷ Davies, *The Creativity*, 96 (note nr. 1).

of self-communication.⁶⁰⁸ The communication from within the Trinity characterized by compassion outflows deliberately and creatively, engendering the world, which, as Davies says, “is itself constituted as the issue or outflow of an act of self-communicating self-donation within the triune God.”⁶⁰⁹ Eliminating any “hermeneutical distance between divine and human voice,” by Incarnation, God “speaks with his creation, and with humanity, from the center of the created order: from within the domain of signs.”⁶¹⁰ This idea provides the material for the creation of the basic principle of Christian semiotics:

in the light of creation *through* Christ, the sign which refers can become, must become, also address. Christian semiotics has to take account of the intimate connection between the world as product of divine speech, signifying its source, and the divine speech itself as it breaks through the created order and speaks *with us* directly.⁶¹¹

We can easily infer, according to this semiotic principle (the second one consists in the ‘triad of voices’) that God, who talks through the whole created order to which the Scripture text belongs, speaks directly through the Scriptural text.

Scripture’s addressivity is, in conformity with the sign’s addressive character, of two types: weak and strong. The weak form of addressivity suggests speech which targets a general audience, as in the case of the Catholic Epistles, where the one who receives communication is only presupposed, although maybe unknown.⁶¹² Strong addressivity takes place when a speaker refers personally and directly to a listener.⁶¹³ This

⁶⁰⁸ Davies, “The Sign Redeemed,” 235.

⁶⁰⁹ Davies, “The Sign Redeemed,” 234.

⁶¹⁰ Davies, *The Creativity*, 96.

⁶¹¹ Davies, *The Creativity*, 96.

⁶¹² Davies, *The Creativity*, 138.

⁶¹³ Davies, *The Creativity*, 138.

second form of addressivity supplies the necessary background for the initiation and unfolding of the dialogue.

The second form of addressivity makes the Scriptural text receive “a new intensification of meaning.”⁶¹⁴ If the interpreter takes into consideration the presence of God who communicates with us “*from within the world,*” and since the divine presence is in the text, then the interpreter perceives the text as God’s voice which addresses us personally and distinctly. The text, by its addressive function, does not only indicate God, it makes him felt and real. The text, Davies teaches us, is not only a bundle of signs meant to point beyond themselves, energized by a *kenotic* outburst, but also a conveyor of God’s *pleroma*.⁶¹⁵

The greater the intensification of the biblical text’s meaning, the more convinced the interpreter is that God governs from *within* each thing and segment of time, as he realizes that he stays in front of a certain concrete text, just perceived and proximate, and at a definite moment, *here and now*. The *thisness* of the text (which makes ‘*this* particular act of reading’ possible)⁶¹⁶ and its spatiotemporal subscription, both elements being part of the providential plan, causes the interpreter to conceive the text and the moment of its reading as a unique act by which God addresses him personally. The conjunction between the moment of reading, the text read, and the interpreter makes the Scriptural text receive new values and a supplementary broadening of the meaning. Since this conjunction of the three elements is providentially coordinated, then the text receives axiological valences that are added to the common syntax of an ordinary text. The text becomes a favorable premise for the divine-human communication. The awareness of the fact that the very

⁶¹⁴ Davies, *The Creativity*, 138.

⁶¹⁵ cf. Davies, “The Sign Redeemed,” 231.

⁶¹⁶ Davies, *The Creativity*, 76.

proximity of the interpreter to the text is performed on the basis of spatiotemporal parameters, set up with balance and purpose by God, determines the text to become a fresh and important divine message to which the interpreter must pay attention.⁶¹⁷

The text, as any other element of the world through which God addresses us, becomes the 'voice-bearing body of God'.⁶¹⁸ Here Davies views the text under its concrete aspect: "Voices are produced by bodies; bodies are voice-bearing."⁶¹⁹ As the voice involves concrete materiality, the text as voice-bearing body is distinguished especially by the aspect of its materiality, which creates the premise of experience, and interaction. The text is "a combination of material signs and immaterial meanings."⁶²⁰ Under the aspect of addressivity the text is, using a Peircean understanding, a 'shock that strikes', namely a Secondness.⁶²¹ Davies shows that the materiality of the text is an essential condition for the transmission of the divine voice: "Texts are like bodies, and bodies like texts. For both are voice-bearing. The body frames the voice, while the text carries the voice, like a semantic echo, away from the living immediacy of the body's reality."⁶²²

The *Haecceitas* of the text, its perceived concreteness, makes the reading of the text not chaotic, but planned and framed in a divine plan. The particular and doubtless details of the text, filled with the fullness of the divine presence, amplify the meaning of the text in the same way as the intensification of the text's meaning raises the text to a new degree of importance. If the meaning of a text is amplified by the awareness of the

⁶¹⁷ cf. Oliver Davies, *The Creativity*, 143.

⁶¹⁸ Davies, *The Creativity*, 114, 133, 139, 169.

⁶¹⁹ Davies, *The Creativity*, 155.

⁶²⁰ Davies, *The Creativity*, 101.

⁶²¹ CP 6.19, 8.266.

⁶²² Davies, *The Creativity*, 114.

divine presence, then the intensification of its meaning increases the value of the particular details of the text. If the text under the aspect of its referential function withdraws itself putting its referent in the foreground, the text under the aspect of its addressive function draws the interpreter near its syntactic-semantic contents, opening the way for a sort of special and imperious dialogue. Since God talks through the text, *here and now*, then each statement in the text, interrogation or exclamation, becomes God's affirmation, interrogation or order. If God speaks *now and here* then the textual contents of a paragraph achieve a maximum of attention and a surplus of significance. As Davies observes, "the sign receives a new intensification of meaning through the sense of a divine presence which communicates with us *from within the world*."⁶²³ Thus, any mode of communicative process of the text becomes God's own mode of address. Peirce remarks three such modes: "As to the nature of the Immediate (or Felt?) Interpretant, a sign may be: Ejaculative, or merely giving utterance to feeling; Imperative, including, of course, Interrogatives; Significative."⁶²⁴ Consequently, because God communicates by affirming, interrogating or exclaiming something by means of the text, then, it is entailed that its interpreter should answer by practically affirming the statement or, if necessary, by answering the question of the text or acting in conformity with the objective of the imperative. A passive attitude on behalf of the interpreter towards the real and personal divine communication carried out by virtue of the text's addressive function would represent at least an ignorance of the divine and creative dialogue partner, who makes himself, with compassion and power of transformation, a bridge towards the reader of the biblical text.

⁶²³ Davies, *The Creativity*, 138.

⁶²⁴ CP 8.369.

2.3. Creativity

A third aspect under which the text can be examined is that of creative transformation of the interpreter's work and life. The Scriptural text, as instrument of God's speech, is the means by which God engages himself in 'the *creating* of others'.⁶²⁵ As it happens in Eucharistic worship, the text does not only fulfil the function of referentiality which, at a certain moment, is 'overtaken by the divine presence' through the function of addressivity, but it guides simultaneously both the process of understanding and the spiritual formation of the interpreter.

Wanting to account for the nature of interpretation, Davies highlights, from the semiotic perspective, both the identity and the difference between human nature and that of Christ. The similarity between the two natures consists in the fact that both of them are 'hermeneutical' natures.⁶²⁶ However, the difference resides in the fact that, whereas Christ *is* the ultimate meaning of Scripture and the world, man only discovers interpretation as he discovers Christ. Consequently, man *is* neither the interpretation itself nor does he produce it somehow, but he discovers it and is morally formed and deeply carved by it.⁶²⁷

Davies believes that man has to admit that hermeneutical activity is associated with the Holy Spirit; only thus might the interpreter discern the divine will and approach a text interpretatively in a correct manner. Davies says:

Our hermeneutical tasks are part of our spiritual character as reflective linguistic beings. The interpretation of the divine will, as expressed in the world, in dreams and in Scripture, is a human activity which is especially associated

⁶²⁵ Davies, *The Creativity*, 169.

⁶²⁶ Davies, *The Creativity*, 125.

⁶²⁷ Davies, *The Creativity*, 125.

with the Holy Spirit. Interpretation of this kind entails an element of divine illumination, or intervention, therefore, which draws the individual interpreter more fully into the realm of divine power.⁶²⁸

The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of the correct reception of the divine purpose and the means of avoiding a partial and distorted interpretation at the same time.⁶²⁹

Following the phenomenological logic, the Holy Spirit's mediating creativity makes it possible for the interpreter to pass from the 'firstness' of the text's referentiality to its 'secondness' or addressivity.⁶³⁰ Davies depicts the Holy Spirit's creative function, which can be easily placed in the third phenomenological category, as such: "The Spirit . . . is not address as such but the dynamic which makes address as communication possible."⁶³¹ Without the Holy Spirit the interpreter would constantly be outside the biblical world and always insufficiently influenced by its truths because, as Davies underscores, "It is the Spirit that allows us, if we allow the Spirit, to enter the biblical world."⁶³²

The correct understanding of the text - Davies insists on observing this by recalling the Judaic Law's interpretative practice - "is tied in with practices of living which are grounded in the order of creation."⁶³³ Therefore, the Holy Spirit who intercedes in interpretation is the same one who connects interpretation with life and daily practice, illuminating

⁶²⁸ Davies, *The Creativity*, 113.

⁶²⁹ Davies, *The Creativity*, 114.

⁶³⁰ The Holy Spirit's mediating function can be found in the following paragraph: "The Spirit stands apart from these in so far as the Spirit is not itself figured as a speech agent and does not itself address; rather we have seen that the Spirit is the underlining ground of the communicability which inheres in conversation and which makes it possible." (Davies, *The Creativity*, 97).

⁶³¹ Davies, *The Creativity*, 121.

⁶³² Davies, *The Creativity*, 121.

⁶³³ Davies, *The Creativity*, 116.

the interpreter with respect to the effect that the text can have upon life in general.⁶³⁴ This creative mediation of the Holy Spirit conjures the third phenomenological category: thirdness.

Not only does the Holy Spirit intermediate the world's spiritual-material unity inaugurating the Son's Embodiment, but He is also the one who makes possible both the informing of the interpreter's mind and the moulding of his character and implicitly of his practical life by instituting some character habits. These character and practice habits are "a kind of memory of who we are, and of who we have been."⁶³⁵ The Spirit guarantees a non-individualistic approach to the biblical text, which is to say an approach to Scripture in an ecclesial manner.⁶³⁶ The reading of the text, as it is performed within the perimeter of the interpretive community, is not solipsistic. Beside this, Davies indicates that the central place offered to the interpretative act protects the approach to the biblical text from fundamentalist excesses (in the sense that the meaning does not only belong to the text, but is discovered in the sphere of life and action as well), just as the fact that 'the agency lies with the text' spares interpretation from a relativistic labelling (the singularities of the text do not allow the interpreter to see anything he/she wants to see in the text).⁶³⁷

Davies insists on saying that the authentic reading of Scripture involves not only a theoretical exercise of understanding, but also the conformation of the reader's behavior to God's creative mode of being, a mode which especially lies in communion and compassion. As a consequence of this, authentic interpretation cannot be either anti-social or non-compassionate. Similar to the Eucharistic celebration, the

⁶³⁴ Davies, *The Creativity*, 122.

⁶³⁵ Davies, *The Creativity*, 157.

⁶³⁶ Davies, *The Creativity*, 157.

⁶³⁷ Davies, *The Creativity*, 121 (footnote).

interpretation of the text affects, by the compassionate transformation that it generates, the interpreter's own "embodied life in its personal and social manifestations."⁶³⁸ This fashioning of the interpreter by the Holy Spirit's creative work inevitably leads to life's sanctification of the one who lets himself be introduced to the Scripture's sacred universe.⁶³⁹

As the Word and Holy Spirit guide our interpretation, this obliges us to envisage the text under its referential, addressive and creative aspects too. If it were not for the addressive character of the text, the Bible would be a book like any other book deprived of sacredness and the exceptional competence of conveying God's voice in the providential moment and place of its reading.

The text under all these aspects completes the semiotic approach and can be outlined in the following table:

Table 3. The addressive stage

Phenomenological categories/sign	<i>The sign under its quantitative aspect</i>	The sign under its aspect of instrument for the creative divine address
<i>Firstness</i>	Vagueness	Referentiality
<i>Secondness</i>	Singularity	Addressivity
<i>Thirdness</i>	Generality	Creativity

⁶³⁸ Davies, *The Creativity*, 169.

⁶³⁹ Davies, *The Creativity*, 125.

3.The text as a means of pragmatic-integrative self-reflexion

If in the first stage of interpretation we follow the understanding of the “singularities” of the text and the relationship among them, by reducing the degree of vagueness of the text, and in the second stage we conceive the text as a means of God’s address, the last one will concern the pragmatic-integrative clarification of the sign. This last stage is an outcome of the conjunction between Davies’ transformational theological orientation and Peirce’s pragmatic rationality. That is to say, the text as a bearer of God’s voice facilitates in a “creative” way the divine-human dialogue, in light of which the interpreter discovers the continuity between the text (as sign) and him/herself, clarifying the former by means of its predictable consequences for the probable condition of the latter in a foreseeable future. For instance, the means of seeing the fulfilment of moral duties from the perspective of the account that we will give on the Day of Judgment can illustrate pragmatic-predictive reasoning. The following prayer illustrates such rationality: “Enable us, by your grace, faithfully to discharge the duties of our several stations, remembering the strict and solemn account which we must one day give before the judgement-seat of Christ.”⁶⁴⁰ The categories of this last stage, as I am going to underline them, are: presentness (immediacy), self-responsivity and integrative reasoning, and in the following pages I will develop them more extensively.

⁶⁴⁰ “College Prayer,” King’s College London, accessed 31 November, 2014, <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/aboutkings/principal/dean/chaplaincy/prayeratkings/collegeprayer.aspx>.

3.1. Presentness (immediacy)

The pragmatic-predictive stage regards the text as a world which absorbs the interpreter in the flow of narration up to the point when the reading of the text occurs simultaneously with the self-reading of the interpreter in the integrality of his being, with past, present and especially future. This stage confers to interpretation a predictive and revelatory involvement.

More precisely, Davies demonstrates that Scripture “authentically mediates to us the structure and dynamic of God’s originary, revelatory speaking.”⁶⁴¹ It has this power, because the Holy Spirit “signals the supernatural quality of authentic scriptural reading.”⁶⁴² This kind of reading of Scripture implies the understanding, by its reader, of the fact that God addresses him personally from the very core of the letter and of the sentence in Scripture. By the fact that the Holy Spirit “allows us to ‘hear’ the divine voice that speaks within the biblical word”⁶⁴³, we have to face the reality of entering the biblical word “and [becoming] integrated into the perichoretic speaking.”⁶⁴⁴ The narrative embrace, mediated by the Biblical text, is doubled by the integration of the interpreter into God’s compassion and in the compassionate manner of living for one’s neighbour. Thus, the interpreter becomes, by the mediation of the Spirit, one of the inhabitants of the Word of God. It is the same Spirit who is the guarantee of the fact that the interpretation of the Biblical text is not individualistic but essentially ecclesial.⁶⁴⁵

⁶⁴¹ Davies, *The Creativity*, 120.

⁶⁴² Davies, *The Creativity*, 121.

⁶⁴³ Davies, *The Creativity*, 121.

⁶⁴⁴ Davies, *The Creativity*, 121.

⁶⁴⁵ Davies, *The Creativity*, 121.

At the same time, beside the fact that man inhabits the text through the intermediation of the sign and the Spirit of the sign, we must remember that the sign, in this case, Scripture, inhabits the human mind through the mental effect (interpretant) which it produces. The 'interpretant' is the place where Peirce's and Davies' hermeneutics leave structuralism behind.⁶⁴⁶ In other words, the meaning of the text is given by the *understanding* of the text *in act and community*. Hence, there exists a third aspect of the sign (the first one is quantitative, the second is addressive), namely the transformational one, where the transmissive self-communication of God in Christ through the text is ultimately embedded in human forms of habitual thinking and behaviour. This hermeneutical order of understanding the text matches well the pastoral undertake of adjusting a person's life according to the divine will.

Therefore, the mind embraces the Biblical text while the Spirit helps the interpreter immerse himself in its narration, thus making the text include the interpreter in its narration and world. In other words, we can say that the interpreter is present in the Word, as lector and partner of the divine addressivity, whereas the Word is formatively present in the interpreter, as sign. This double perichoretic grasp is the hermeneutical basis of understanding Scripture. Due to this double perichoretic grasp, the understanding of the text cannot be reduced to its comprehension and full stop; on the contrary, the reading of Scripture presupposes the reading of the self by the self. And reading, as a consequence, implies self-reflexivity. Reading and the self are thus inseparable both in the quotidian act of understanding and in the professional or confessional one of interpretation.

⁶⁴⁶ According to structuralism, the meaning is found exclusively in the relationship between the signified and signifier, whereas in the triadic semiotics, the meaning is given by the effect (interpretant) that the relation between the signified and signifier has upon the interpreter.

But as the self becomes a part of the text's world and, implicitly, the reading of the text implies the reading of the self, then in the self-reflexivity of the act, the self can be found in a primary condition, where it appears as "firstness." As Colapietro notes,

[t]he 'I' is the source of actions - a creative spring of efficacious exertions. As a possibility of action, the 'I' is an instance of what Peirce calls firstness: 'we never can be immediately conscious of finiteness, or of anything but a divine freedom that in its own original firstness knows no bounds' (1.358).⁶⁴⁷

This condition of the self is characterized by "immediacy" or "presentness," in the sense that it is

a consciousness in which there is no comparison, no relation, no recognized multiplicity (since parts would be other than the whole), no change, no imagination of any modification of what is positively there, no reflexion -- nothing but a simple positive character.⁶⁴⁸

Yet, as Colapietro underscores,

[t]o recognize the firstness of the self is, in part, to see the individual self in its utter uniqueness and qualitative wholeness (cf. Muoio 1984, 174-75). This aspect of the self is ineffable (e.g., 1357; c. 1890). But, it is important to emphasize that it is an aspect of the self and not the self in either its entirety or its essence that is ineffable.⁶⁴⁹

Although insufficiently defined, the self has the character of being an "agent" integrated in the narrative flow of the text. From the perspective of the immediacy of the self, the text is both a divine means of address as well as one of highlighting the self (of focusing on itself). This means of focusing on the self is a revelatory one. In this case, revelation is not a mere object of study but, especially, an instrument of highlighting, and

⁶⁴⁷ Vincent Michael Colapietro, *Peirce's Approach to the Self: A Semiotic Perspective on Human Subjectivity* (Albany: State University of New York press, 1989), 112.

⁶⁴⁸ CP 5.44.

⁶⁴⁹ Colapietro, *Peirce's Approach*, 74.

engendering reflexive evaluation of the self. Therefore, the interpretation of the Scripture cannot halt at a theoretical study, detached from the reading self, and the understanding of the self cannot be made outside the revelation that accommodates it.

Carrying the discussion further, and connecting it to the *transformative* presence of the sign, namely the formative competence of the *final interpretant*, responsible for the beliefs of action and habits of thought, the moral habit of the reader becomes an indexical clue, more or less vague, of the text being read. The final interpretation of the text, by the mediation of the Holy Spirit, materializes in the moral habits of the person or in the religious practice of the community of interpreters of this text (the church). The believer is, consequently, the sum of the books that he reads under the action of the Holy Spirit, as the text is the sum of the people who have produced it under the action of the same Spirit.

3.2. The responsive side of the self-reflexive self (secondness)

A second aspect of the self is the one in which the self is objectified to itself through the act of self-reflexion. This is a dialogic state of the self: the self communicates with itself. In fact, “All thinking is dialogic in form.”⁶⁵⁰ The self regards itself within an exercise of internal semiotic knowledge.

Peirce considers that the self has a profound level, a “deeper self,” and a superficial one made out of instances, which offers itself to the former for evaluation: “Your self of one instant appeals to your deeper self for his assent.”⁶⁵¹ The responsive side - the “surface” one - of the self,

⁶⁵⁰ CP 6.338.

⁶⁵¹ CP 6.338.

that which is visible to itself, its externality, although it is in perpetual change, is the one which confers contents and identity to the self, whereas the “immediacy” stands for the being of the self or its becoming. The immediacy of the self grants the being a start, the possibility to be, life. Nevertheless, that facet of the self which is visible to itself and to others, the bodily one, the material phenomenon of the self, which exists by virtue of an opposition, drawing the attention of the “deeper self” to its real and aware thoughts, actual habits, objective actions, movements and reactions, is “secondness.” The actual existence of the self, individuality, is secondness.⁶⁵² The secondness of the self plays an important role in the action of self-knowledge. Referring to self-knowledge, Colapietro points out the following things:

We come to know our own minds in essentially the same manner that we come to know anything else (including the minds of others), namely, by an inferential process in which the element of secondness plays an important role.⁶⁵³

Peirce and Davies do not talk about a solipsistic self-reflexion, but about the existence of a conversational self-reflexion, a conversation that implies self-understanding through the eyes of the other.⁶⁵⁴

3.3. Integrative reasoning (thirdness)

3.3.1. The successive self

By objectification, the self is a sign to itself. The sign makes self-knowledge possible; but a pertinent aspect is that the sign is part of a

⁶⁵² CP 1.414.

⁶⁵³ Colapietro, *Peirce's Approach*, 121.

⁶⁵⁴ Davies, *The Creativity*, 119-120.

continuous series of signs, and this sign can be imagined as a successive element, which means that it follows a sign and is followed by another one.⁶⁵⁵ The sign is only a semiotic *event*, which fulfils its semiotic function – that of data-conveying vehicle - until it retires, making room for another sign from the indefinite row of signification.⁶⁵⁶ The sign makes way for another sign in the semiotic process.⁶⁵⁷ In fact, any thing, as a unitary part of a continuum, is marked by successiveness. Peirce believes that “There is reason to believe that the act on of the mind is, as it were, a continuous movement.”⁶⁵⁸ Consciousness enters into the series of successive interpretants.⁶⁵⁹ Things are successively present to the mind.⁶⁶⁰ Formal logical judgment is successive.⁶⁶¹ Any “complex inference comes to the same thing in the end as a succession of simple inferences.”⁶⁶² Linear sequences are successive.⁶⁶³ Impressions are successively conveyed to the mind.⁶⁶⁴ Even the life of the universe, under the metaphysical aspect, is ‘under-way’, starting from a basic and disorderly stage towards a state of complete intelligence and order.⁶⁶⁵

Since the sign can be perceived as operating successively, and the self is a sign, then the self is characterized by successiveness. Davies

⁶⁵⁵ cf. CP 6.185.

⁶⁵⁶ cf. CP 1.339, 5.547.

⁶⁵⁷ CP 6.105.

⁶⁵⁸ CP 5.329.

⁶⁵⁹ CP 2.303.

⁶⁶⁰ CP 7.355.

⁶⁶¹ cf. CP 3.641, CP 1.52.

⁶⁶² CP 5.269.

⁶⁶³ CP 4.108.

⁶⁶⁴ CP 5.222.

⁶⁶⁵ Robert S. Corrington, *An Introduction to C.S. Peirce* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993), 45.

thinks that man, similar to signs, has a successive character as well. He accounts for this analogy as follows:

In the natural state, signs are ‘under-way’ or transitional entities whose claim to reality is balanced by their condition of self-evacuation, or self-emptying, in the act of pointing beyond themselves to something other. For a sign to exist is for it to be poised on the brink of vanishing for the sake of the reality which it designates: whether conceived as objects in an extra-semantic world or the infinite deferral of other signs.⁶⁶⁶

The sign is evacuated ‘into the presence of another entity.’ Davies calls the sign’s transitory character ‘a form of self-emptying’, reminding us of the kenotic action of Christ’s embodiment.⁶⁶⁷

Peirce reckons that the human person is a continuous succession of the self: he “is not absolutely an individual. His thoughts are what he is ‘saying to himself,’ that is, is saying to that other self that is just coming into life in the flow of time.”⁶⁶⁸ Colapietro, quoting DeWitt Parker, offers the following explanation for the successiveness of the self:

Without any reference to Peirce, DeWitt Parker drew a distinction between the matrix self and focal selves. A ‘focal self is an event, coming and going, one of a series of events flashing in and out of existence’ (1941, 43). The matrix self is the background against which focal selves operate; it is (as its name implies) a womb out of which these transitory selves emerge. ‘There is but one self: the focal self and the matrix self are only two aspects of a single fact. The matrix self is a layer of deeper significance that continues and endures from one ongoing activity to another, but it cannot exist unless there is a focal activity that carries it on’ (Parker 1941, 45). Parker’s distinction can be used to clarify Peirce’s account of the self. The matrix self is that complex of habits that represents both a

⁶⁶⁶ Davies, *The Creativity*, 141.

⁶⁶⁷ Davies, *The Creativity*, 138.

⁶⁶⁸ CP 5.421.

summation of the past and an orientation toward the future.⁶⁶⁹

The “matrix self” (the “deeper self” in Peirce’s terms), considered to be that aspect of the self’s characterized by habits and cognitive judgments, is a “thirdness.”

What is relevant here is the deliberation that the superficial or focal facet of the self is a transitory event, while the self which is characterized by habits is future oriented. Otherwise said, the self as a unitary being evolves in time and is oriented in a foreseeable or eschatological manner.

3.3.1.1. An excursus on future-oriented judgment

In “Mind and Body,” Peirce wants to demonstrate that any research has to be guided by final causation, for mental operations are “governed exclusively by final causation.”⁶⁷⁰

In order to explicate this issue, Peirce uses a simple quotidian example. I will reproduce this example in light of other texts of the philosopher to emphasize the role of past experiences, actual experiences and predictable events for the interpretative undertaking.

Therefore, while the philosopher is sitting at the desk of his study which has a door to the garden, his dog makes a gesture with its nose, by which he is asking for the immediate exit from the building. Peirce shows somewhere else that the first response, non-cognitive, to a physical experience is a “percept.”⁶⁷¹ This is not a judgment in the true sense of

⁶⁶⁹ Colapietro, *Peirce’s Approach*, 93-94.

⁶⁷⁰ CP 7.371.

⁶⁷¹ CP 1.253.

the word.⁶⁷² However, the judgment formed instantly, and expressible in a sentence with respect to the nature of that thing is a “perceptual judgement.”⁶⁷³ The perceivable gesture of the dog is immediately interpreted by Peirce as the “sign that he wishes to go out.”⁶⁷⁴ It is assumable that, in accordance with other explanations of the philosopher, the interpretation of the sign is shaped on the basis of previous experiences, similar and recurrent. The recent memory of similar experiences, connected to the “percept,” intercedes in the interpretation of his dog’s gesture. The flashback, in this respect, is called by Peirce, as we saw in the first section dedicated to him, “ponecept.”⁶⁷⁵ Peirce stresses that one cannot draw a line between “percept” and “ponecept.”⁶⁷⁶ They work as a whole, but can be separated only at an imaginary level, only with the aim of representing them.

The interpretation of the gesture perceived is not reduced only to that. According to previous experiences (ponecept), Peirce makes a few probable anticipations related to what could happen (for example, to spoil parts of the newly made garden-patch), called “antecept,” from the unification of the words “anticipation” and “percept.”⁶⁷⁷ The probable anticipation is possible because the “experience assures us that such expectations are reasonably sure.”⁶⁷⁸ Hence, the interpretation of the sign comprises both past experience and the foreseeable future. The element to which Peirce draws our attention is that the interpretation, in the example given, the reception of the idea of letting the dog go outside, by

⁶⁷² CP 5.54.

⁶⁷³ CP 5.54.

⁶⁷⁴ CP 7.369.

⁶⁷⁵ CP 7.648.

⁶⁷⁶ CP 7.648.

⁶⁷⁷ CP 7.648.

⁶⁷⁸ CP 7.369.

means of the probable prediction of the consequences which result from this, has no relevance outside a purpose, or final causation. The rationally imaginable consequences which flow from the idea of letting the dog go outside are seen in relation to the purpose declared, in this particular case that “there is a newly made garden-patch out there, where I do not wish him to go.”⁶⁷⁹ Thus, the clarification of an object by its effects has to be undertaken in accordance with a certain purpose, or final causation.

Subsequently, a present sign is interpreted based on the data of the memory and according to the predictable consequences with regard to a certain purpose.

3.3.2. The integration of the self in the act of interpretation

Since the self is absorbed by the text and, consequently, the interpretation of the text is carried out together with taking into account the self in its integrality, with present and future, then the semiotic-pragmatic analysis of the text determines the inclusion of the successive self, the self in its temporal and existential integrality, in the endeavour to disclose the meaning of the text. The meaning of the text, therefore, cannot abstract from the successive self, the self under its transitory aspect. The reasoning which integrates the self, with all its present and future states, in its interpretative account, can be called *integrative reasoning*. The self which explores this integrative thinking, “the matrix self” (the “deeper self”) is the self under the aspect of thought, logical continuity, argumentation; thus, the self under this aspect is an element of “thirdness.” The cognitive side of the self, or “the matrix self” brings the interpretative act together with the self-reflexive side, facilitating the

⁶⁷⁹ CP 7.369.

understanding of the Biblical text in an integrative way, namely in such a way that the significance of the text is not related only to the superficial self, but to “the future self” too.⁶⁸⁰ This intersection of the text with the self represents the background of the interpretation “in act” because the clarification of the text is fulfilled by relating it to the action, immediate or in the distant, rationally imaginable future, which would result from adopting its prescripts with conviction. In Davies, the interpretation “in act” is an interpretation “in freedom,” because it is an interpretation deprived of mechanistic determinations or predominant physical laws. Peirce considers that the determinist forces have no possibility of prevailing as long as the gross potentiality (firstness) and actuality (secondness) are not cancelled.⁶⁸¹

In consequence, we can ascertain that there are two rationalities which are conjoined in *integrative semiotics* considered as a logic which makes room in its interpretative exercise for the self-reflexive and successive self. First of all, there is the *integrative* rationality, based on Davies’ semiotic Cosmology, which claims the double “perichoretic” interrelation between the text and the self. Secondly, there is the pragmatic rationality of Peirce, which presupposes the understanding of a thing by means of conceiving its practical consequences. We have to mention once again that the pragmatic maxim highlights this modality of seeing things as follows: “Consider what effects that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then our conception of those effects is the whole of our conception of the object.”⁶⁸² Then, there is the predictive judgment, which is entailed in the pragmatic rationality by the fact that the pragmatic thinking anticipates imaginatively, appealing to past experiences accommodated

⁶⁸⁰ CP 5.477, 7.591, 7.630, 7.635.

⁶⁸¹ CP 8.268.

⁶⁸² CP 8.119.

by the memory, consequences which *would be going to be* fulfilled. The idea of the linear ontology of the self, of its evolving in time, implies a predictive judgment, in accord with which the self is probably conceived as projecting itself in future states of its existence. These future states are imagined either on the basis of experience of some physical laws, or according to some discoveries which are related to supernatural revelation, in our case, Scripture. Both the physical-experimental ground and the prophetic one represent the background of the predictability of the self. This judgment lends a hermeneutics which is anchored in integrative semiotics' prophetic aspirations and nature.

When we include, however, within the pragmatic judgment, the idea of some future states in which the self will probably be found (on the basis of experience or revelation), for example aging or presenting oneself at the divine judgment, then anything will be understood or clarified by means of our understanding (on the basis of probable inference) of the effects this thing is going to have on the self which will be present at a foreseeable moment; for example, retirement or receiving the divine final sentence. The predictive cognition makes those major predictable moments of the self become normative final causes, on the one hand, in the sense that they have the role of guiding the entire life of the self, and on the other hand, definitive, in the sense that they remain unchanged as long as the experimental or revelatory fundament is sound and endorses them. The conjunction of integrative and pragmatic rationality, along with predictive calculation, can lead to a pragmatic-integrative rationality. This type of rationality is, on the one hand, common to all rational beings, as it is employed when we travel, when we want to pass an exam, or we sign an insurance contract, and, on the other hand, it is a Christian way of thinking, emphasized clearly in the passages of the Epistle of James, that talks about the eschatological event of the divine judgment, requiring the correction of the conduct with regard to it.

In conclusion, in the case of interpreting the biblical text, the pragmatic-integrative rationality implies the understanding of the text from the viewpoint of the rationally imaginable consequences that the text has upon one of the major future conditions of the self, immediate or distant, among which there are private or public moments, but also the meeting with God at the eschaton.

Thus, in conclusion, we can say that *integrative semiotics* deals with the text first from the perspective of its material-syntactic contents, intending to diminish its degree of vagueness (the quantitative stage); secondly, as a divine voice-bearer, grasping it from the angle of its amplified religious value (the addressive stage); and thirdly, from the viewpoint of the rationally imaginable consequences which flow from the appropriation of its principles, which pursue the fulfilment of the decisional actions that the text requires (the integrative stage). It is important to say that, in practice, these stages intermingle so that the passage from one to another is subtle.

The general role that the semiotic-integrative methodology plays is double: on the one hand, it encompasses a rationality of correction of the modern paradigm, and on the other hand, it unites the study of the book with faith, creating the prerequisites for the translation of the principles of the text in habits of conduct.

The pragmatic-integrative step can be displayed schematically, next to the other two previous stages, in the table below:

Table 4. Integrative semiotics

Phenomenological categories/sign	<i>The sign under its quantitative aspect</i>	<i>The sign under its aspect of instrument for the divine</i>	<i>The sign under the aspect of its continuity with the successive self</i>

		<i>creative address</i>	
<i>Firstness</i>	Vagueness	Referentiality	Presentness
<i>Secondness</i>	Singularity	Addressivity	Self-responsivity
<i>Thirdness</i>	Generality	Creativity	Integrative reasoning

4. Conclusion

The enterprise of integrative semiotics is in fact both a cognitive and an anthropological hermeneutical process of discerning meaning, which is organized triadically and takes place on the basis of theological-philosophical foundations. Firstly, the quantitative approach to the text involves diminishing the vagueness which inheres in any text, starting from the delimiting of terms or concepts (singularities) as they are found in the text through the action of hypostatic abstraction, and their correlation on the basis of pure abstraction (generalization) with other terms or concepts, so that in the light of this correlation one will return to the terms (singularities) of the text with extra understanding, discovering what they refer to. Secondly, the principle or idea that the referentiality of the text underscores (referentiality) becomes, in conformity with the double function of the language (that of referring and that of addressing) and by the direct and creative mediation of the Holy Spirit (creativity), God's speech in Christ (addressivity). And lastly, the reader confronted by the self-communication of God in Christ through the text (presentness) will undertake self-evaluation, observing the successive nature of his own being (self-responsivity) and receiving the text in a dynamic and integrative manner, trying to see the latter from the outlook of whole-

person transformation (with present and future) that the text might produce (integrative reasoning). Therefore, the reader's encounter with the text involves, at the same time, the reader's encounter with God and himself for the purpose of a fuller comprehension of the text's meaning. By virtue of the text's addressivity, the transmissive and compassionate self-communication of God in Christ through the text is received by the reader under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and is then transposed into habits of thinking and daily forms of behavior which could occur as an answer to the pragmatic understanding of the function that the text can have upon his or her own present and future being. Fundamentally, the attempt of *integrative semiotics* to discern meaning attends to pastoral theology by the fact that it aims to correlate man's life with God's will communicated in Christ through the text.

CHAPTER IV

An interpretation of James: an identification of personal religiosity

“There have always been scholars who lived by God’s word as they heard it in Scripture just as earnestly as they studied the texts. But in all honesty it has to be acknowledged that biblical scholarship does pose a temptation, both for scholars and those who read their books: the temptation to substitute study for faith and action.”

(Richard Bauckham, James, 1999)

1. The concrete methodological stages of interpretation

From the methodological point of view, the commentary which follows, guided by the idea of the synergic unity between faith and action, pursues the unity between the understanding of the text and active faith, employing the stages of “integrative semiotics” as they were outlined above. Firstly, we will approach the text from the perspective of its contents (the quantitative or material stage). Since the purpose of interpretation is of reducing the vagueness (immense complexity) of the terms or sentences, then the terms or sentences will be analysed from the viewpoint of their generality, with the aim of putting them more easily in connection with other similar terms which, however, bring more information, so that the former may be understood in light of the latter. For example, the terms “all his ways,” in 1:8, will be regarded not only from the perspective of what they refer to in their particular place of the epistle, but also from that of their generality, that is to say, they are words which comprise in their class “any” or “every” way. Thus, we will be able to see that the term “all his ways” is used in the Septuagint with

reference to “deeds.” This will determine us, abductively, to consider that “all his ways,” in James, means “all his deeds.” When, with the purpose of diminishing the degree of vagueness of a term, we resort to it under a general aspect, comparing it with other terms or similar ideas, we will use terms such as *compare*, *allude*, *same*, *similitude*, and we will write them in *italics*. Secondly, (the addressive stage), the text under the aspect of its referentiality, brings with itself a piece of information with a general destination, but under the addressive aspect, it becomes a text aiming at the reader who is present in the proximity of the text. Consequently, the principles encapsulated in interrogations, imperatives and statements will be seen as vehicles which transmit the voice and will of the divine Creator to the person who is both inhabited by and inhabiting the text. Thirdly, (the integrative stage), we pursue understanding the principles of the text by means of its predictable consequences upon the state where the reader will be in a foreseeable future. Subsequently, the reader will have a future-oriented judgment, anticipating, on the basis of the text, the condition where he will be in the future, trying to see what effect the text has upon his future state and what exactly the text determines him to undertake in the present. Here, the usual words that indicate such a judgment are “final cause” and “effect.” On the other hand, I will try to apply the method of integrative semiotics so that the technical complexity of its stages will not overshadow the fluency of James’ ideas and the logic of the epistle.

2. The literary genre of the epistle

Regarding the literary genre of the epistle, based on the addressive nature evoked by the introductive verse and the elements which prove the fact that the author knows most of his addressees, one can consider that the Epistle of James is a letter. Cheung, after a minute analysis of the multiple considerations concerning its genre, and after an increasing

attention to the elements of the writing, which show with certainty the existence of a “sender” and “recipients,” concludes that the Epistle of James “is a paraenetic instruction fitted to the frame-components of the epistolary genre.”⁶⁸³ We will therefore remain at this study concerning the literary genre of the epistle. Without establishing the literary genre - or using the terms of the integrative semiotics - of its stylistic *generality*, it is difficult to see to which category of writing it belongs, so that we may know, consequently, what to expect from it.

3. A concise exposition of the content of the epistle

James believes that the Christian’s aim is to be perfect, complete, lacking nothing (1:4); but what James realizes is that his recipients are imperfect, lacking the qualities and deeds recommended to Christians, both in the private sphere of the trial and in that of community life and communication with neighbors. One thing that the author accuses them of is oscillating, without remorse and with a real amount of self-deception, between faith in God and friendship with the world, claiming, despite their obvious duplicity, that they are Christians, thereby deceiving themselves. In order to persuade the addressees that their spiritual identity is not given by what they pretend about themselves, but by their acts, James appeals to the synergy between the internality and externality of the self, demonstrating that the externality of the self highlights the nature of its religiosity. The synergic pairs, found predominantly in the first three chapters, display the author’s calling to draw near, without duplicity, to God, and to cleanse their inner self as well as the outside of

⁶⁸³ Cheung, *The Genre*, 59.

their being. The last part of chapter 4 and all chapter 5 are a reverse thematic reiteration of the first three chapters.

4. First section - The active faith within the trial and the identification of the believers' religiosity (1:1-27)

In the first chapter, the author describes the way in which his addressees should relate to trials. In the first part of the chapter, the author talks about the way in which one must look at the trial (1:2-12), and in the second part, about how exactly we must *not* look at it (1:2-27), given that the “various testings,” as an external complex of circumstances, may be interpreted subjectively and groundlessly, as God’s manner of harming people. What we can remark is that in both parts of the chapter, the author enters into a series of explicative excursuses. Thus, in the first part, the author elaborates the way in which wisdom, once its absence is felt, can be achieved by faith (1:5-8), and then man, poor but faithful, and the rich but doubtful one, must evaluate his life from the viewpoint of its end (1:9-12). In the second part of chapter one, after the author dismantles the mistake of understanding that God would tempt people (1:13-15), he enters into an excursus, of a quite considerable size, where he argues for the idea that God is good, generous (1:16-21), and the believers, in case they do not deceive themselves, will take advantage of the divine gift and the Word planted in them, fulfilling it in their acts, thus becoming happy in their ministry (1:22-25). In the last part, Christians are given the occasion to reflect upon their own way of behaving in order to spot the kind of religiosity by which they are motivated (1:26-27).

4.1. Salutation: James 1:1

“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.”

The quantitative stage

The epistle opens by addressing: χαίρειν. The one who addresses is ‘ΙΑΚΩΒΟΣ’ and his addressees are “the twelve tribes which are in the dispersion.”

James’ identity is given by the manner in which he describes himself as δοῦλος.

The term in James evokes obedience to and dependence not only on God but also on Jesus Christ, which opens the way for important discussions in the chapter of Christology, like Jesus’ sovereignty. It is easy to assume that the association made by author between Θεοῦ and Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is not random and seems to put Jesus Christ under the same aura of sovereignty that God enjoys. This association can neither be ignored nor considered a major highlight, as it is not encountered elsewhere in the epistle, as Adamson underlines:

Since proverbially no man can be the servant of two masters, it may be that James, in order to obviate any possible offense to the cherished monotheism of orthodox Jewry, is here emphasizing that service to Christ is also service to God, since they are both One (John 5:17, 9:4, 17:4); but we doubt whether such subtlety in the opening is truly in keeping with the character of this Epistle.⁶⁸⁴

⁶⁸⁴ Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, 51.

Nevertheless, Jesus Christ's sovereignty is marked by the author through the term κυρίου. George Carraway points out J. A. Fitzmyer's suggestion

that it is reasonable to think there were copies of the LXX in the first century that made the substitution [κύριος] for the Tetragrammaton [יהוה]. Fitzmyer went on to argue from a review of Qumran documents that the Aramaic *Mar* (generally equivalent to κύριος) or the Hebrew דאני were used in an absolute sense for God.⁶⁸⁵

If James belongs to the Hebrew religious culture indeed, as most commentators hold, then he definitely knows the vital meaning resulting from the attachment of this term (κύριος) to the person of Jesus Christ.

There are three different *hypotheses* regarding the identification of the addressees of James' writing, named in the first verse δώδεκα φυλαῖς, "the twelve tribes." The first *hypothesis* is that James, a Jew, addresses the Hebrews.⁶⁸⁶ This formula, strictly, δώδεκα φυλαῖς, can be encountered in Ez. 47:13 too. The second *hypothesis* is that James addresses the Hebrews converted to Christianity, taking into account the references to Jesus Christ in James 1:1 and 2:1.⁶⁸⁷ A third *hypothesis* is that James addresses the Christian church all over the world, since, as Peter H. Davids points out,

[t]he church has quite naturally appropriated the title, for it was the work of Messiah to re-establish the twelve tribes (Je. 3:18; Ez. 37:19-24; Pss. Sol. 17:28), and Christians recognized themselves as the true heirs of the Jewish faith (Romans 4; 1 Cor. 10:18; Gal. 4:21-31; Phil. 3:3).⁶⁸⁸

⁶⁸⁵ George Carraway, *Christ is God Over All, Romans 9:5 in the Context of Romans 9-11* (London, UK; New York, USA: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2013), 9.

⁶⁸⁶ cf. Bauckham, *James*, 14.

⁶⁸⁷ cf. Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr and Robert W. Wall, eds., *Catholic Epistles and Apostolic Tradition: A New Perspective on James to Jude* (Waco, Tex: Baylor University Press, 2009), 163.

⁶⁸⁸ Davids, *The Epistle of James*, 63.

The last two *hypotheses* have to be considered more attentively taking account of the epistle's Christian nature and its Jewish cultural background. Both of these hypotheses explain the Hebrew language and the Christian connotations of the epistle better, which makes the association of Christ's image with "the twelve tribes" a *matter of course*.

James' greeting can be translated by 'be glad'. Historical research makes us take into consideration that this greeting of James is common for Greek language speakers of that period.⁶⁸⁹ The New Testament shows two circumstances where this formula is used: Acts 15:23 and Acts 23:26. The etymological *similarity* between the verb χαίρειν in 1:1 and the noun in the accusative χαρὰν in 1:2 could make us believe that the association is a deliberate one, since James wants in 2:1 to see his readers glad when they pass through various trials.

The addressive stage

James' condition of servant, both of God and of Jesus Christ, confers on the text a special aura. According to the fact that the author introduces himself as a "servant of God and Jesus Christ," the text recalls the author's dependence on God and Christ. The curiosity of the study is supplemented by the emotion of the intersection with the divine voice encompassed in the greeting in an addressive way. The greeting is not only a word addressed long ago, but an intention with reverberations in the present. The reader feels himself integrated among the first addressees of the epistle and sees himself a happy recipient of it and its transformative message.

⁶⁸⁹ cf. Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, 51; Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 127.

The integrative stage

The first verse is seen integratively when regarded in the context of the epistle as a whole. The reader of the integrative semiotics will intend to know the text's contribution to his present and future. The eschatological marks of the book, such as the survival on the Day of Judgment, represent the *final cause* for understanding the epistle. Therefore, the reading of it implies the rigour of the research as well as the humility predisposed to obedience.

4.2. How to understand the trial of faith (James 1:2-4)

"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

The quantitative stage

The author begins verse 2 by highlighting the manner in which trials must be looked at. Trials must be regarded with all joy (πᾶσαν χαρὰν). The noun in the accusative χαρὰν, found in other writings of the Old Testament,⁶⁹⁰ denotes the joy which appears either as a consequence of drinking wine or it is engendered by keeping a holiday or receiving God's Word. Notwithstanding, the 'joy' and 'trials' seem to be a novel

⁶⁹⁰ The noun χαρὰν is used in a number of verses like: Est. 9:22, Tob 11:17, 13:10, Ps. Sol. 8:16, Sir. 1:12, Sir. 30:16, Jl. 1:12, Is. 55:12, Jer. 15:16.

association of terms in James. The author starts to elucidate matters, pointing out in the third verse that the trial of faith (τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως) produces patience. The author continues his argumentation, stepping in the idea of knowing something by the effects it produces

(κατεργάζεται),⁶⁹¹ showing that even patience, similar to the testing of faith, must be perceived according to what it works. It works (ἔργον), James underscores, both perfection (τέλειοι) and completeness (όλόκληροι). Also, the one who is patient, consequently reaches the moment when he 'lacks in nothing'.

Nevertheless, the intelligibility of the association of πειρασμοῖς (trials) with the noun χαράν (joy) remains a *vague* reality, except for the case when we analyse the meaning of the terms τέλειοι (perfect) and όλόκληροι (complete). The hypothesis that being τέλειοι and όλόκληροι is a reason for joy could explain why James considers that the trial of faith, accompanied by patience, is finally a happy event. The *same* term τέλειος is employed 21 times, under different forms, in the Septuagint and in all cases perfection is placed in a desirable light, a kind of supreme human goal.⁶⁹² The verse which best renders this is the commandment in Deut. 18:13 "Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God."⁶⁹³ Given the fact that perfection is a divine order, this makes its fulfilment a great accomplishment. Cheung, after a careful examination of the concept in the Old Testament, Philo, Qumran Literature, New Testament and Early Apostolic Writings, considers that

⁶⁹¹ The term is also met in James 1:20 where the author underlines a thing again, in this case "man's anger," according to the type of effects it produces or not.

⁶⁹² Alfred Rahlfs, ed., *Rahlfs' Septuagint, with Apocrypha & Variants* (Editio altera, revised and corrected edition by Robert Hanhart), exported from BibleWorks 8 Electronic Edition (Norfolk, VA: BibleWorks, 2013), July 7, 2015.

⁶⁹³ *The Holy Bible, King James Version, Specially Formatted for eReaders, With Direct Verse Access*, Montecristo Publishing LLC, 2011.

[f]undamental to the concept of perfection is the notion of faithfulness and undivided loyalty to God. Perfection also means a complete obedience to the Torah, sometimes in terms of loving God and humanity. Thus it has both a religious as well as a moral dimension. In examining the concept of perfection in James, we need to bear in mind these characteristics which form part of the background for the understanding of it in James.⁶⁹⁴

Two texts in New Testament comprise the term ὁλόκληροι, one of them is the present one, and the other is 1 Thess. 5:23. Unlike τέλειος, in LXX, the noun ὁλόκληροι is used not only with reference to internal spiritual states, pointing, for example, to absolute righteousness or godliness (4 Mc. 15:17, Wsd. 15:3), but also to the sphere of visible things, referring to the undivided stones out of which the altar of Yahweh is made (Dt. 27:6). Cheung rightfully notices that “The pair τέλειοι and ὁλόκληροι then may denote both qualitative and quantitative completeness, that is, 'completely complete.’”⁶⁹⁵ In conclusion, this association of terms may indicate both the undivided nature of the interiorised soul and that of its externality. In fact, James points to the following verses, the doubt characterized both by double-mindedness and hesitation expressed in the area of action (1:8).

Since the trial of faith leads to an undivided loyalty to God and to a complete attachment to God, body and soul, then the trial of faith, by its effect, is a good thing. Thus, the trial must be seen with joy. Subsequently, it is hard to overlook that James analyses the ‘trial of faith’ not from the perspective of what it represents at the moment of bearing its pressure, but from the angle where we see the fruit that the trial of faith produces freely.

⁶⁹⁴ Cheung, *The Genre*, 177.

⁶⁹⁵ Cheung, *The Genre*, 180.

The addressive stage

Although the present text does not refer to God directly and explicitly, nevertheless, given that it makes reference to a deuteronomic commandment (Dt. 18:13) and some sacred desiderata defined by the relationship between man and God (3 Kgs. 8:61, 11:4, 15:3, 15:4 and 1 Chr. 28:9), the paragraph 1:2-4 in James might be seen as God's commandment that concerns the change of the outlook regarding the trial. Unlike God's 'voice' from the deuteronomic literature or that of the Kings, which either claims perfection categorically, or realizes its absence with disgust, God's voice from James 1:2-4 invites the reader to accept the trial, because the latter is the primordial factor which contributes to the attaining of the perfection that one diligently looks for. Consequently, the imperative denoted by the verb "count it"⁶⁹⁶ (ἡγήσασθε) and its reference becomes the imperative by which God addresses the reader. A proper change of attitude regarding the trial of faith is a real guarantee for the believer who wants his completeness and perfection. Both the way in which the mechanism for reaching perfection is dismantled and the familiar spirit with which the address itself is performed compel the reader not to ignore the divine calling to change his perspective and look at the trial of faith by considering its outcome. The directive of the correct appreciation of the trial demands an immediate change of outlook. The trial must be seen as a benefit, and the adoption of this perspective is the human answer to the divine address.

The integrative stage

⁶⁹⁶ ESV.

This text not only invites the reader to an original mode of comprehending the load that the trial sometimes weighs painfully upon the believer, but it also introduces James' reader into a manner of thinking which is otherwise sketched by James in his whole epistle, which is to say a thing must be examined from the angle of its subsequent effects that it produces upon the faithful man. It is not only the subsequent effect of accepting trial, that is targeted by James, but also the final one, described in 1:12: "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him." These two paragraphs have to be taken together because, as Cheung rightly affirms, "Semantically, 1:2-4 and 1:12-15 are linked together by the words πειρασμός - πειράζειν, δοκίμιον - δόκιμος, ὑπομονή - ὑπομένειν, and the theme of endurance in face of testing explicated in the two subsections."⁶⁹⁷ As the lack of duplicity and the abundance of virtues are the *final cause* of the believer, and the acceptance of the trial of faith with joy is the proper means to reach these, then the text will motivate the believer to welcome, with the tempered emotion of the wise and knowing joy, the harsh circumstances of the trial of faith.

4.3. On receiving wisdom (James 1:5-8)

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

⁶⁹⁷ Cheung, *The Genre*, 62

The quantitative stage

This paragraph is found in the extension of the previous one through the following linking words: πίστεως – πίστει, λειπόμενοι – λείπεται.

After the author shows that the outcome of patience lies, besides achieving the firm loyalty towards God, in the happy state of not 'lacking in anything', he brings up the situation when wisdom is absent. Therefore, James underscores in verse 5 what exactly the believer has to undertake in case he lacks wisdom.

The theme of this text section, therefore, is how to achieve wisdom (σοφίας). In LXX, it is shown 12 times that wisdom is received by man from God, and none of these verses lets us understand that wisdom would be something that we could achieve without God.⁶⁹⁸ James points out that receiving wisdom is sure to the extent in which we take into consideration four things: 1. God gives wisdom (διδόντος Θεοῦ), 2. God gives wisdom to everybody (πᾶσιν), 3. God gives it generously (liberally - ἀπλῶς) and without regrets (ὀνειδίζοντος) and 4. Wisdom comes as a result of asking for it specifically (αἰτείτω).

The request for wisdom, nevertheless, belongs to the domain of faith (ἐν πίστει). In order to eliminate any shade of misunderstanding, the author highlights that the request for wisdom, which is carried out without faith, will not be accomplished. The text points out that the author's accent falls on the profile of the doubtful man. In order to draw our attention to this profile even more, James uses the analogy with the

⁶⁹⁸ Ex 31:3, 35:31, 35:33, 35:35, 2 Chr 9:23, Ps. 50:8 (51:6), Prv. 4:11, Prv. 16:16, Jb. 11:16, Wsd. 7:15, Is. 11:2 and Bar. 3:12 (all in LXX).

“wave of the sea driven and tossed by the sea.” This profile is characterized by two coordinates, an internal one δίψυχος (double-minded), and an external one ἀκατάστατος ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ (unstable in all his ways). The fact that James offers relatively much room to the description of this profile is not trivial. It is the first time in the epistle when the author draws attention to man’s internal and external side. The importance of the reader’s approach to the image of the doubtful man is not given only by the fact that the author offers some considerable space to this issue but also by the fact that James says explicitly that God does not answer the prayer of an undecided (δίψυχος) and inconstant man in all his ways. Luther notes the relationship between the domain of mind and that of works by interpreting verse 8 as follows:

Their hearts are unstable and wavering before God, and they are changeable and fickle in all their ways, James 1, 8. Since they are aimless and inconstant at heart, this will appear likewise as inconstancy in regards to works and doctrines.⁶⁹⁹

Luther’s emphasis is placed here, on the one hand, on the synergic link between heart and works and, on the other hand, on the association of works and doctrines.

In what follows I intend to verify the *hypothesis* that the pair δίψυχος - ἀκατάστατος ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ is somehow related to Hebrew culture. If this relationship is found in the train of thought of Hebrew culture where the mind-body synergy is at home, then we can understand why James, as a Jew acquainted with Hebrew culture, refers deliberately and even repeatedly both to the internality and externality of the human being.

James is the only writer who uses the term δίψυχος in the entire New Testament. He uses it in his epistle employing two inflexions:

⁶⁹⁹ Lenker, *Luther’s Epistle Sermons, Epiphany, Easter and Pentecost*, vol. II, 96.

δίψυχος⁷⁰⁰ and δίψυχοι⁷⁰¹. The number of occurrences of the term in other literatures, as Jeremiah Mutie points out, beside the two uses in James, the term is found 8 times in *Did.* 4:4; *Bar.* 19:5; *1 Clem.* 11:2; 23:2-3, *2 Clem.* 11:2; 23:5; 19:2 and as much as 55 times in *The Shepherd of Hermas*.⁷⁰² Even though we do not encounter this term very often in the Hebrew literature we still come across words that have the prefix 'δι' which indicate duplicity in hearing or speaking or even reasoning.⁷⁰³ There are terms that evoke a specific kind of duplicity: 'double-tongued' (διγλωσσος) in *Sir.* 5:9; 28:13; *Did.* 2:4 (cf. *Barn.* 19:7); the concept of 'double-faced' in *T. Ash.* 2:5; and even the concept of 'two tongues' in *T. Ash.* 2:5, 'duplicity in hearing' in *T. Benj.* 6: 5-7, 'double tongue' in *1 Tim.* 3:8, and the concept of 'double minded' (διγνώμων) in *Did.* 2:4 and *Barn.* 19:7.⁷⁰⁴ The concept of double-minded in *Sir.* 5:9, 28:13, *Did.* 2:4 is denoted by the term διγνώμων.⁷⁰⁵ This term has the same translation but a different spelling. It expresses a *similar* concept, in fact *identical*, to the term δίψυχος in James 1:8, but with a different root. The difference between δίψυχος, which is an adjective derived from the prefix 'two', and the noun 'soul'⁷⁰⁶ and διγνώμων is that the former transposes the idea of double souls figuratively while the latter speaks, again figuratively, about a division at the level of mind. The concept of double-minded indicates a spiritual deficiency⁷⁰⁷ in the letter of James. Undoubtedly, despite the

⁷⁰⁰ James 1:8.

⁷⁰¹ James 4:8.

⁷⁰² Jeremiah Mutie, "The identity of the Διψυχος in The Shepherd of Hermas," Faculty Publications and Presentations (March 1, 2011), Paper 178, 2, accessed December 23, 2014, http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/sor_fac_pubs/178.

⁷⁰³ Cheung, *The Genre*, 197.

⁷⁰⁴ Cheung, *The Genre*, 197.

⁷⁰⁵ Cheung, *The Genre*, 197.

⁷⁰⁶ Moulton, ed., *The Analytical*, 103.

fact that the two words are written differently, they expose an interior state of duplicity.

I am attempting to verify whether there is, in the Hebrew culture before James, a text which presents δίψυχος and ἀκατάστατος ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ next to each other.

The words ‘in all his ways’ occur four times in Deuteronomy, the Septuagint translation: 10:12, 11:22, 19:9 and 30:16. All these texts point out Lord’s requirement and desire that Israel should keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord ‘in all his ways’.

In order to find out what exactly the expression ‘in all his ways’ means, it would be wise to look at other instances in the Old Testament where the aforementioned words appear. There are two contexts in which these words are used in the Psalms. They are Psalm 145:17 (144:17 in LXX) and Psalm 91:11 (90:11 in LXX). There is a clear index in Psalm 145:17 about what these words express. It says: “The Lord is righteous in all his ways / and kind in all his works.”⁷⁰⁸ Taking into account that the Jewish rhyme consists mainly in the repetition of ideas expressed in different words, then the idea at the end of the second sentence (the sentences being formally divided by the conjunction ‘καὶ’) entails (by the word ‘works’) the idea at the end of the first one (expressed by ‘all his ways’). Therefore, ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ (all his ways) has the same meaning as ἐν πάσαις τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ (his works).⁷⁰⁹ If the word-group ‘all his ways’ is synonymous with ‘all his works’, then we might conclude

⁷⁰⁷ The idea of duplicity is *also* highlighted by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (in Matthew 6:24). In the context in which Jesus spoke about laying up treasures in heaven, aiming to make his audience love not the things on earth but those from above, he concludes clearly that no one can serve ([οὐδύνασθε](#); [δουλεύειν](#)) both God and money at the same time.

⁷⁰⁸ ESV.

⁷⁰⁹ Psalm 144:17.

that we can understand why the Deuteronomic request for Israel to ‘walk in his ways’ expresses in fact the desire for Israel to do God’s works or to perform holy and righteous deeds. Similarly, it can be easily discerned in the paragraph of the Psalm 91:11, 12 that the sentence ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ (“in all your ways” ESV) is enclosed together with the action in verse 12: “lest you strike your foot against a stone.”⁷¹⁰ Since it refers to something concrete and experiential, even physically painful, this addition would keep the interpreter from thinking that ‘all his ways’ somehow denotes character, fortune or fate. On the contrary, it would make him realize that ‘in all your ways’, due to its close context, refers to physical and observable actions.

Also, another text in which one may find the *same* sentence ‘in all his ways’ translated by LXX with “ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ” is 1 Samuel 18:14 which, taking into account the context of Saul’s jealousy of David, can hardly be interpreted as referring to David’s character, fortune or fate, the expression ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ, since these words are associated with David’s success. And his success consists in acts of victory which are clearly displayed by the women who, celebrating David, sing that “Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands.”⁷¹¹ Therefore, it would better fit the context to translate ‘ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ’ by ‘as all his deeds’ such as other translations have already done, as for example the translation provided by ESV: ‘And David had success in all his undertakings, for the Lord was with him.’

If ‘all his ways’ indicates works, venture or enterprises then ‘all his ways’ in James 1:8 can also be understood as referring to works, but in James’ context as characterizing specifically a doubting person. Thus, in James 1:8 we have a mind-body construction exposed by the interior

⁷¹⁰ ESV.

⁷¹¹ 1 Sm. 18:7 (ESV).

character of double-mindedness, and the exterior and observable unstable deeds. As Thomas Manton notices,

That doubtfulness of mind is the cause of uncertainty in our lives and conversations. Their minds are double, and therefore their ways are unstable. First there is (as Seneca saith) *nusquam residentis animi volutatio*, uncertain rollings of spirit; and then, *vita pedens*, a doubtful and suspensive life; for our actions do often bear the image and resemblance of our thoughts, and the heart not being fixed, the life is very uncertain.⁷¹²

We have to underscore as concerns the text in James that the author intends to convince his readers that God does not answer the prayer of the one whose heart and deeds are characterized by lack of trust in him and inconstancy. And he does this in through a Hebrew line of thought, characterized by the mind-body unity.

The addressive stage

The text in 1:5 chiefly refers to acquiring wisdom. In this context of discussion, there is an emphasis on a verbal-actional communication between man who asks, and God who answers. God, full of generosity and liberty, is ready to give to everybody (πᾶσιν). God's generosity and liberty amplify the prayer's impetus.

James feels compelled to mention that the answer to one's request is strictly related to the faith of the requirer. From the viewpoint of the addressive function, the text becomes God's voice, which invites man to ask for wisdom within the objective parameters of faith. The one who is deprived of wisdom, but eager to acquire it, is imperatively

⁷¹² Thomas Manton, *A Practical Commentary, or an Exposition with Notes on the Epistle of James; Delivered in Sundry Weekly Lectures . . .* (London: R. Gladding and A. Hamilton and Co., 1840), 41.

ordered to ask it from the Lord. The urge of the text “let him ask” (αἰτεῖτω) becomes thus a divine command.

The request made by the doubtful man will be rejected because he is altogether characterized by an irresolute heart and unsteady actions. The fact that God turns down the request on the basis of these criteria denotes God’s attention, to the same extent, towards the internal moral substance of the one who prays and the external objective reality of his deeds. Consequently, God entails both man’s inner self and his acts in the sphere of his vision.

Allocating generous room for describing the intellectual-actional profile of the doubter, the text is the means by which God, found at the core of the text and in the substratum of its conjunction between time and the person who interprets, draws attention to the fact that both the sphere of the intellect and that of deeds are together under the divine sight.

The guarantee of the request fulfilled does not lie in the request itself but in the interior steadfastness and regular performing of constructive works anchored in faith. It is not the very act of asking which assures the divine answer but the heart’s hidden living and deeds’ visible one. The text, clothed in its addressive aura, intermediates God’s thought concerning the background and criteria of an acceptable request. So the interpretation of a text, without an adequate response to its contents, would represent in fact either a mistrust in its general veracity, or an omission of the fact that God aims both at man’s heart and at his inevitable deeds.

The integrative stage

In order to answer the question regarding the text’s effect on the interpreter’s subsequent status, one must pay attention to verse 7, where

James indicates the fact that man, marked by doubt, should not expect to receive *anything* (τι) from the Lord. The indefinite pronoun τι encompasses anything that can be asked from God, so not only wisdom.⁷¹³ The text places the reader in the context of adopting wisdom as well as the crown of life (announced by author in 1:12) by prayer and faith. The meaning of the text for the interpreter (community) that awaits the reception of the ‘crown of life’ has huge importance. If we take as *final cause* the acquisition of wisdom immediately and receiving the “crown of life” eschatologically, then prayer and faith in God become immediate instruments that the reader assumes. The meaning of the text resides in the fact that it invites the reader to become a man of prayer and faith. Therefore, the reader interested in these will live in the parameters of suitable prayer and unwavering faith.

4.4. The anticipation of exaltation (James 1:9-12)

“Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.”

1. The quantitative stage

The link between this text and the previous one seems to consist in the meaning of the terms: ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινός, translated by *the lowly*

⁷¹³ Moulton, *The Analytical*, 403.

brother. James also remembers the *same* social category in 2:5, but he uses the adjective πτωχοὺς (poor) there, bearer of the *same* idea: a man with a more than modest social-economic status. The adjective πτωχοὺς designates the man who, in spite of being poor, is enriched by God with faith and inheritance as reward for his love. Now since ‘the lowly brother’ can ‘boast in his exaltation’ because he is ‘rich’ in faith, then verse 9, which talks about the poor faithful man, follows logically the paragraph which brings up the importance of the prayer made with faith. This way we understand the presence of the paragraph 1:9-11 rightly after 1:5-8.

Two things can be noticed in v. 9, one of detail and another one of overview. James brings up the ‘exaltation’ of the lowly brother. The *vagueness* of the term exaltation (ὑψει) forces us to investigate its significance. A *hypothesis* would be that exaltation presupposes reaching the eternal, glorious and heavenly kingdom inaugurated by Christ. There are 7 occurrences of the noun in its genitival form in the Septuagint. The meaning of its employment there is that of acceding to Sheol (Is. 38:10 LXX), of prevalence (Jb. 39:18) and that of social-economical superiority or hierarchical excellence (Ez. 31:2, 31:7, 31:14). None of these Septuagint texts confirms the hypothesis that ‘exaltation’ would mean entering into God’s glorious kingdom. However, the near context, verse 1:12 and 2:5, which is about receiving the ‘crown of life’ and being invested with the status of ‘heirs of kingdom’, reveals a mighty change of status. These two verses make the hypothesis plausible. So even if the verses mentioned in LXX which contain the *same* term, ὑψει, do not match the Christian image of ‘exaltation’, still, the near context makes the hypothesis relevant.

A second important thing is that the author connects the present status of the poor one with his future inheritance, encouraging him to express himself with a sort of boast, calculated and according to his poor but faithful condition. Of course, as Moo asserts, the term καυχάσθω does not mean here “the arrogant boasting of the self-important, but the

joyous pride possessed by the person who values what God values.”⁷¹⁴ The author summons the poor one to show his joyous pride thinking of the outcome that he remains anchored in faith and love,⁷¹⁵ despite the circumstances of his pauper life, namely ‘exaltation’ or, as we saw above, the receiving of the ‘crown of life’ and the status of ‘heir of the kingdom’. The fact that James calls the poor one to enjoy his actual circumstances (a faith in spite of the circumstances of a subsisting way of life), from the perspective of the effect produced by them on his subsequent condition, denotes a predictive way of thinking, a feature of his entire epistle.

Like the poor man, the rich man is also invited by the author to evaluate his present state, from the point of view of the next major moment in his passing life. James emphasizes the degenerative direction of man’s biological life, whose point of maximum degeneration is complete and irremediable withering. James calls the itinerary of humiliation by the Greek noun ταπεινώσει (humiliation). Its meaning is amplified by the comparison with some botanical elements and together they build the argument of man’s ephemerality: the rich man passes like the flower of the grass, its flower falls, so the rich man will wither likewise in his pursuits. However, the relationship between life’s destructive trajectory, ταπεινώσει, and the verb in the imperative καυχάσθω (let boast)⁷¹⁶ can express either an acid irony from the author or a more profound meaning. How exactly can anybody brag about dying or perishing irremediably? A *hypothesis* which could reduce the *vague* meaning of the connection between ephemerality and boasting can be that James bears in his mind the fact that admitting the truth about

⁷¹⁴ Douglas J. Moo, *James*, Reprint edition (Nottingham, England: Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2009), 69-70.

⁷¹⁵ According to 1:12 and 2:5.

⁷¹⁶ Moulton, *The Analytical*, 226.

ephemerality can lead to self-correction and rehabilitation.⁷¹⁷ If the author had thought about the benefit of admitting this truth, then the imperative ‘let him boast’ in his humiliation would not be an irony but a means of determining his rich audience to accept self-reflexion, correction and look for moral rehabilitation by drawing near to God. There are texts in the Epistle of James which prove the high probability of this conjecture. First of all, the theme of man’s transience is highlighted by James in 4:14, which is followed by a correction of perspective and way of talking, both of them taking the form of drawing near to God. On the other hand, the idea of self-reflexion and correction is wholly underscored and expressly required by the author in 4:7-10. The praise regarding one’s own humiliation implies emphasizing the admitting of one’s own ephemerality, which represents the first step to the moral and spiritual recovery of the self.

2. The addressive stage

In 1:9, the recipient of the epistle is asked to look at his/her actual condition from the angle of the eschatological perspective of exaltation. The poor state of the moment must not be analysed outside the more general context which entails the exaltation of the one who endures with faithfulness even the lowly but passing condition of poverty. The certain reality of exaltation demands the release of the believer’s deep emotion and its public and anticipative celebration. Thus, James asks the exercise of the joyous pride imperatively. The order to celebrate anticipatively the

⁷¹⁷ cf. Kamell (Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, *James*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2008, 55-56). Kamell indicates that James’ pronouncement is “dripping with irony” in case the rich man is considered a non-Christian, or it “comes in acknowledging their dependence on Christ rather than on ‘mammon’” in case the rich man is considered a Christian.

exaltation is rather a sincere acknowledgement that life, with all its afflictions, continues for the one who believes and loves God, with the remarkable and desirable condition of exaltation. Under the aspect of addressive creativity, the imperative *καυχάσθω* (let boast) becomes the divine imperative for the celebrative and anticipative acknowledgement of the exaltation. God asks the poor, but faithful, reader to make out of the heavenly exaltation a personal visible and precious symbol that he should wear with pure joy.

3. The integrative stage

As a voice bearing body of God, James 1:9-11 invites the reader to re-anchor himself spiritually in the certain and lofty reality of exaltation (*final cause*) and, *in effect*, release himself from the deliberate ignorance of life's ephemerality, orientating without reservations, but with joy, toward the sublime and unique condition that awaits him. The believer will thus be merry even in the trouble generated by lacks and un-soothed hurts, because his life is not defined only by the present condition, but also by the reality of his future condition. Contrary to this, the rich man, Christian or non-Christian, *in effect*, will re-evaluate the things he acquires from the perspective of life's ephemerality and the future reality, admitting, in humility, his dependence on God, or, based on the situation, accepting his vindictive approach to Him humbly.

4.5. God as the origin of the Word not the source of temptation (James 1:13-21)

"Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But

each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures. Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”

1. The quantitative stage

Those who triumph over trials, staying in the perimeter of the faith in God, the author shows, are going to enjoy the achievement of perfection (1:4) and also, to be rewarded by receiving the prestige of coronation (1:12).

There are two meanings regarding the testing and both are evoked by the author in this chapter. The first one (δοκίμιον - testing) is the understanding according to which the trial is regarded from the angle of the effects it produces (1:3), from the angle of patience respectively, and lastly of perfection and completeness (1:4, 5), and the second one (πειράζω) refers to the trial from the viewpoint of the cause that endorses its genesis (1:13).

If God is seen as the cause of temptation, then both excuses and justifications would arise concerning the unsuccessful overcoming of the trial. Firstly, there would be the excuse that we cannot resist temptation because it is directed by God himself, and secondly we could affirm that being tempted, and hence sinning, is an acceptable thing because God himself, the one who puts it on the stage, agrees with its place, nature

and proportion. In this case, trusting the Lord and living in sin would be an acceptable condition of the believer. This very mistaken attitude is attacked by James in 1:13. As Moo mentions, there are such attitudes but, at the same time, also corrective reactions to their errors:

A century and a half before James, Jesus the son of Sirach was protesting against this tendency: ‘Do not say, “Because of the Lord I left the right way”; for he will not do what he hates. Do not say, “It was he who led me astray”; for he has no need of a sinful man’ (Ecclus. 15:11-12).⁷¹⁸

In verse 13, trying to argue in favour of the fact that God does not tempt, he uses the premise that God cannot be tempted (Θεὸς ἀπειραστός ἐστιν). Why does the fact that God cannot be tempted represent an argument against the presumption that ‘God tempts others’?⁷¹⁹ One of the pre-requisites, a *hypothetical* one, at first sight, which accounts for James’ employment of this term, could be that all those who are tempted and sin harming others, tempt others in turn, harming them. This would explain James’ statement that “God is never tempted to do wrong”⁷²⁰ and could consequently make us admit that “He Himself tempts no one.”⁷²¹ The verification of the *explicative hypothesis* can prompt the following data: the term πειράζω is translated at least 5 times in LXX, by ‘temptation-tempting,’ and denotes God’s being tempted by people. We can ascertain in 4 of these 5 occurrences that those who tempt others, it means they are tempted themselves, and therefore they do evil by tempting Yahweh. The temptation of the fear for people leads to tempting God (ἐπείρασάν) by lack of respect (Nm. 14:22). Ps. 77:41 (LXX) indicates that lust (Ps. 77:30) and doubt (Ps. 77:32) lead to tempting God (ἐπείρασαν τὸν θεόν). The people’s temptation of idolatry leads to

⁷¹⁸ Moo, *James*, 74.

⁷¹⁹ Moo enquires the same issue but from a different perspective (Moo, *James*, 75).

⁷²⁰ James 1:13 (NLT).

⁷²¹ James 1:13 (ESV).

tempting God by disobedience (Ps. 77:56). Ps. 94:9 (LXX) binds explicitly people's 'insensibility of the heart' with tempting God (οὗ ἐπείρασεν) materialized in the quarrel at Massah and Meribah. Consequently, each bad thing done to the other, in this case to God, has another bad thing or temptation at origin where the very evil-doers or tempters fall. So we can say that the premise: 'the fact that somebody tempts others, harming them, means that he/she was tempted in his/her turn' is veridical. It is therefore correct to say that James has the same idea in mind when writing 1:13, trying to persuade his addressees not to say "I am tempted by God," since God cannot be tempted to harm anyone. On the contrary, God's generosity evoked in 1:5 and 1:17 denotes God's benevolent character. Doing evil and tempting others involve entering into an evil game that God refuses to join.

Man, however, does not resist the baits of this game, becoming, consequently, vulnerable in front of death's ineluctable event. The explanation why man enters this game is that "he is lured and enticed by his own desire." The author reveals in verse 15 the entire process of temptation since its genesis until the committing of sin and assuming death.

In the first place, temptation starts with ἐπιθυμία (passionate desire). The adjective in the genitive ἰδίας (own)⁷²², associated with the noun ἐπιθυμίας, renders the fact that lust is a proper possession, a personal asset, something that belongs to the respective person. As the etymology of the word ἐπιθυμίας demonstrates, the desire is neither bad nor good in itself, with only one exception, namely when it is found in concrete opposition to the person that it inhabits and entices, getting hold of or trapping him in the obscure snare of clutching. There are two signs which indicate the evil nature of the lust: the first one is the verb

⁷²² Moulton, ed., *The Analytical*, 199.

ἐξελκόμενος (being drawn away) which points out lust's diverging nature and the second one is the word δελεαζόμενος (being enticed) that places the person in the condition in which he is lured. Temptation, therefore, starts with the moment when one's own lust attracts by enticing him. Even though the initial moment of temptation is consumed once the lust's mission is accomplished, a mission that distracts and captivates the host person, the process in which the tempted person does evil continues with the second moment where ἐπιθυμίας conceives (συλλαβοῦσα) an offspring of the same nature as itself, resembling by this the image of a mother⁷²³ who loves her own child but hates up to death the home that hosted and protected him/her integrally and delicately. The third moment is that of birth (τίκτει), which is a metaphor of committing evil or sinning. James chooses from the diversity of Greek terms for sin that of ἁμαρτία. The noun ἁμαρτία circulated even before Aristotle. The term's meaning summons a wrong action, and can comprise a vast range of acts from the most serious ones to those which may be overlooked. Eckart Schutrumpf says that:

scholars who have studied Aristotelian ἁμαρτία by investigating the meaning of the term since Homer have concluded that words from stem ἁμαρτ - have such an extensive range of meaning – from criminal acts to quite harmless delicts⁷²⁴

Kenneth Telford, translating Aristotle's *Poetics*, an outstanding work for exploration of the term, notices that ἁμαρτία, being a term from the domain of archery, should be translated by 'missing of the mark' and

⁷²³ All the verses in the Septuagint which entail this verb in the Aorist Participle Active (Moulton, *The Analytical*, 381.), without exception, refer to a mother who gives birth to a child (Gn. 4:1,17, 25, 21:2, 29:35, 30:17,23, 38:3,4).

⁷²⁴ Eckart Schutrumpf, "Traditional Elements in the Concept of Hamartia in Aristotle's *Poetics*," in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, ed. R. J. Tarrant, (USA: Harvard University Press, vol. 92, , 1989): pp. 137-156, 137-138.

considers that it “is an action, not a suffering or a flaw of character.”⁷²⁵ In the Septuagint the *same* term, ἁμαρτία, appears in 472 verses.⁷²⁶ In these verses, the term evokes, a few times,⁷²⁷ a direct mistake against a person, but most of the time this term refers to inadmissible *actions* from the viewpoint of God’s Law. Corroborating the data from Greek culture and those in Hebrew, we can conclude that ἁμαρτία refers to a negative action. As ἐπιθυμία awakes an interior state and ἁμαρτία, its born child, a visible, actional one, then it is easy to observe that James is again interested both in man’s interior sphere and in his exterior, objective one, putting again a *synergic pair* in the foreground. An opinion which could be hypothesised is that the author appeals to this pair being influenced by Hebrew culture, where the interior feelings and exterior actions are equally appreciated and followed at the same time. This would explain why James accounts for the process of sinning, exhibiting both sides of the human being, *mind and body*.

In verse 16, James returns to the conclusion of 1:13 regarding the fact that God does not do evil by tempting anybody, asking his recipients, with insistence, not to deceive themselves by adopting a wrong concept of God. Verse 17 is revelatory and specific in this respect. God is the source of each good thing and perfect gift. Also, God does not do good with constant interruptions or omissions within which he would do evil to his creatures, on contrary, he does good incessantly and without omission (οὐκ ἔνι παραλλαγὴ ἢ τροπῆς) because in Him “there is no variation or shadow due to change.” Moo makes it clear the manner in which James uses the cosmic metaphor:

⁷²⁵ apud Kevin J. Wetmore Jr, *The Athenian Sun in an African Sky: Modern African Adaptations of Classical Greek Tragedy* (North Carolina and London: McFarland and Co., 2001), 45.

⁷²⁶ Rahlfs, ed., Rahlfs’ Septuagint, exported from BibleWorks 8 Electronic Edition, August 10, 2015.

⁷²⁷ Genesis 20:9, 41:9, 42:21, 50:17; Ex. 10:17, Nm. 12:11.

The fact the two of the words used in this phrase (*trophe* and *parallage*) are often used with astronomical meaning, along with the reference to the 'light' in the previous phrase, makes it probable that a reference to same sort of astronomical phenomenon is intended. *Variation* naturally suggests the periodic movements of the heavenly bodies, but whether 'shadow due to change' refers to the phases of the moon, the shadow cast by an eclipse or the constant alternation of night and day is not clear.

. . . .

This changeableness of creation was frequently used to highlight, by contrast, the unchanging nature of God the Creator (cf. Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation*, 2.33: 'Every created thing must necessarily undergo change, for this is its property, even as unchangeableness is the property of God').⁷²⁸

Not only that God's nature is emphasized by means of the good (ἀγαθὴ) and perfect (τέλειον) gifts that come from Him, but also the fact that the faithful addressees (ἡμᾶς) are born by God, as first-fruit among all his creatures, indicates the *same* divine beneficent and constructive internal fibre of God's being. These two verses support verse 13 in order to argue the fact that God does not produce evil by tempting people; on the contrary, He comes to people's aid by creating and integrating them in an eternal and unchangeable relationship of the Giver-taker type and giving them birth by the Word of truth which, unlike the 'epithumeic enticement', which promises in order to deceive, transforms through truth and transparency.

Temptation gives birth to monstrous and criminal sins,⁷²⁹ whereas God 'gives birth' to man as a divine first-fruit. This is why James urges readers, fraternally but also plainly, to fulfil the following requirements: My dear brothers, take note of this: "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring

⁷²⁸ Moo, *James*, 78-79.

⁷²⁹ James 4:2.

about the righteous life that God desires.”⁷³⁰ God’s paternity is highlighted both by bringing His creatures to life (τῶν αὐτοῦ κτισμάτων) and by giving birth to the human being through the Word (ἀπεκύησεν). Since man would be a dead victim of evil without birth from God, a perpetual reproduction of bad actions, James asks his addressees, relying on the *same* pattern of thought in which mind and matter are seen as being structurally united, to remove their anger because the latter does not do (ἐργάζεται) God’s righteousness (δικαιοσύνην θεοῦ).⁷³¹ James uses the relation *anger* – *practice* (ὀργή - ἐργάζεται) and he asks his addressees to stop any habit of doing evil. From the point of view of the things that this habit produces, it contrasts poignantly with the righteousness’ positive and creative mode of life manifested in God’s action. The means by which James asks his readers to put an end to evil consists, on the one hand, in getting rid (ἀποτίθημι) both of the filth and the overflow of wickedness. On the other hand, evil can be stopped by receiving, with meekness, the Word (λόγον) implanted in them, word that can save their souls (δυνάμενον σῶσαι τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν).

Taking into account the fact that the meaning of the Greek term ψυχή, found in 5:20, denotes both ‘vital breath’ and soul as the interior seat of affections and will, the idea of saving the soul is not trivial. This seems to be compared against James’ idea displayed in 1:14, 15. These verses spotlight the death of the human being in its inside where the perversion of tacit cooperation with lust takes place. This cooperation

⁷³⁰ James 1:19, 21.

⁷³¹ Moo considers that the meaning of the word ‘righteousness’ is to understand it “as ‘the righteous activity that meets God’s approval’ (taking the genitive *theou* as objective; NIV). The phrase ‘do’ (*poieo*) or ‘practice’ (*ergazomai*) righteousness consistently has this meaning in biblical Greek (see *ergazomai*, Ps. 15:2; Acts 10:35; Heb. 11:33 may also fit here).

....

On this understanding, then, to ‘work righteousness’ would be the antithesis of ‘working sin’ (2:9).” In Moo, *James*, 83.

facilitates irreversibly the outflow of malice, through hamartia, in the visible or material sphere of the exteriority of the being.

The author, reiterating in 1:21 the idea that man's interior moral content unstoppably outflows in the objective sphere of relationships, categorically demands believers to cease this degrading and dramatic phenomenon, by giving up on evil and gently accepting the Word (ἔμφυτον λόγον). The inborn Word (ἔμφυτος), by virtue of its implanting power, is the only means for the salvation of the soul from actual sins (ἁμαρτιῶν), and from immediate death (θανάτου).⁷³²

2. The addressive stage

The present text, from the position of a sign which mediates God's creative address, chiefly puts the four imperatives of the text in the forefront: Μηδεὶς . . . λεγέτω (let no one say),⁷³³ Μὴ πλανᾷσθε (do not be misled),⁷³⁴ ἔστω δὲ πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ταχύς εἰς τὸ ἀκοῦσαι (any man should be quick to listen),⁷³⁵ δέξασθε τὸν ἔμφυτον λόγον (receive the word implanted).⁷³⁶ All these verbs are in the imperative and pretend, by this mode of address, the obedience of their recipients. The text's addressive function makes the imperatives of the text emanate the divine paternal (God is the Father, 1:17), beneficent (God does good 1:17-18) and distinct (God is not how people wrongly imagine him 1:13, 16) voice. Specifically, by virtue of the text's function of mediating the divine address, the imperatives become God's voice, which requires the reader's

⁷³² James 5:20.

⁷³³ James 1:13.

⁷³⁴ James 1:16.

⁷³⁵ James 1:19.

⁷³⁶ James 1:21.

self-reflexive attention with the purpose of helping him avoid self-deception regarding God's benevolent and creative nature. Then, since the conjunction between the text and reader is not accidental at all, the imperative concerning the correct understanding of the nature of temptation and the reader's obedience, moderation in speech and refraining from wrath, is amplified by the divine speech, which imposes due reverence (ἐν πραΰτητι) and attention on behalf of the reader. The spirit of modesty with which the divine message is received can comprise both the reader's verbal reply and, especially, the practice of the things required. Thus, thanks to the addressive function, the text brings more comprehension concerning God's constructive nature, comprehension with which the reader may ennoble his knowledge and life. The reader finds himself again in the situation when he is called by God to understand him correctly, obey, balance, abstain from wrath, and last but not least, abandon any dirtiness in exchange for receiving the divine Word. The fulfilment in act of these commandments stands for the adequate answer to the divine address.

3. The integrative stage

As the word implanted and accepted with modesty can guarantee salvation, and since salvation ("salvation of your souls") concerns the present and future,⁷³⁷ then the Word is precious for man's actual and next condition who, with meekness and receptivity, accepts the Father's work, at the present moment carried out by the word of truth. Therefore, the theological correction that the text performs has (as regards the right understanding of temptation and divine character) an eminently

⁷³⁷ cf. Moo, *James*, 85.

redeeming role guaranteeing the 'salvation of the soul', to the extent in which the Word's operativity is picked out with adequate modesty. Thus, the salvation of the soul represents the purpose (*final cause*) which normalizes both the acceptance of the divine word and the action of giving up on uncleanness and wickedness. Once the salvation of the soul is clearly enunciated, then the abandonment of wickedness and receiving the Word in its place will sketch the *effective* and immediate path that the reader will follow. The meaning of the text is, from the semiotic-integrative perspective, deeply soteriological, and its *impact* upon the reader is, clearly, a moral one.

4.6. Doer of the word, the Christian's mode of being (James 1:22-27)

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

1. The quantitative stage

After James asks his addressees to receive with meekness the word planted in them, he introduces the commandment to "become doers of the word."

In what follows, I intend to diminish the *vagueness* of the meaning of the “word,” then I will return to the command referring to the fulfilment in act of the divine word.

What does the “Word” mean? James identifies the word with the Law in 1:23-25 by joining the nouns λόγος and νόμος in the same text block. He asks his readers to deepen both the Word and the Law at the same time, like some authentic practitioners. The Law is qualified by the next data: 1. The Law is considered to be true (Ps. 118:142 in LXX), it is the Law of Truth (Mal. 2:6), 2. Then the Law of God is *in* the heart of the believer (Ps. 36:31, 39:8-10, Is. 51:7, in LXX), 3. Thirdly, the Septuagint stresses the necessity of fulfilling God’s Law (Ex. 18:20, Lv. 19:37, Dt. 27:26, 28:58, 31:12, 32:46, 2 Chr. 33:8, so on in LXX). And, fourthly, God’s Law is perfect (Ps. 18:8 in LXX), in the sense that it “leads to the establishment of a wholehearted relationship with the Lord.”⁷³⁸ The word and the law mentioned by James have altogether the features of the Old Testament Law. Thus, verses 1:18-25 prove that λόγος is characterized by truth (1:18), it is implanted in man (1:21) and has to be fulfilled in deeds, and God’s νόμος is presented as perfect, aiming to make people become completely attached to God, avoiding duplicity deliberately. Subsequently, a valid *hypothesis* would be that the terms λόγος and νόμος in James refer to God’s Law in the Old Testament.

A very important detail, highlighted by Moo, Bauckham and Martin, resides in the relationship between the writing of the Law *in* the heart and the new covenant announced by Jeremiah in 31:31-34. This detail suggests the correlation of the Law with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Moo thinks that James alludes to the text in Jeremiah 31. He says:

More helpful is the recognition that James’ description of the law as ‘planted in’ the believer almost certainly alludes

⁷³⁸ Patrick J. Hartin, *A Spirituality of Perfection: Faith in Action in the Letter of James* (Collegeville, Minn: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 81.

to the famous 'new covenant' prophecy of Jeremiah 31:31-34. According to this prophecy, God would enter into a 'new covenant' with his people and would, as part of that new covenant arrangement, write his law on the hearts of his people (v. 33).⁷³⁹

This observation is very important since the writing of the Law in one's heart is an event characteristic of the new covenant, which is to say the covenant through Jesus Christ, and since James refers to Jeremiah 31:31-34 as well, this means that James confers a Christian aura to his message in 1:18-26, and the terms λόγος can also make reference to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Bauckham suggests too that the texts in James 1:21, 25 and 2:12 allude to the text in Jeremiah 31:31-34, presupposing that the author of the epistle would have regarded it as an eschatological prophecy fulfilled in Jesus Christ.⁷⁴⁰ Moreover, Martin is convinced that James refers to the 'Law' preached by Jesus, which neither defends nor rejects but "includes, expands, and deepens the demand of the 'old' law."⁷⁴¹

Coming back to the imperative in verse 22, I have to show that this is initiated by the verb in the Present Imperative γίνεσθε (be, become).⁷⁴² To become a "doer" can mean to fulfil, on a regular basis, the teachings of the word until their fulfilment becomes a habit.⁷⁴³ In such case, if a person wants to become a "doer," they must undertake the prescribed actions regularly. Or, from another viewpoint, to become a doer can mean the volitive taking on of a mode of being, after a selective consideration of the two possible variants, in our case, the choice between being "only a hearer" (μόνον ἀκροαταὶ) and that of "a doer" (ποιηταὶ) of the word

⁷³⁹ Moo, *The Letter of James*, 32.

⁷⁴⁰ Bauckham, *James*, 141.

⁷⁴¹ Martin, *James*, 67.

⁷⁴² Moulton, *The Analytical*, 78.

⁷⁴³ Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, *James*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2008), 89.

heard. In the first case, the stress falls on the external mechanism through which somebody can become a “doer,” and in the second one, on the internal motivation which can make somebody become a “doer” of the word. Given that James brings up these two options for which he uses the illustration of looking in the mirror (1:23-24) and the idea of attaining happiness (1:25), expressing at the same time his preference to be a “doer,” and the disgust for that of being “only hearer,” this denotes the fact that the one who becomes a “doer” is entirely motivated from within (mentally) to act with regularity in conformity with the prescriptions of the word. Namely, he is resolute about both, the benefits which result from the condition of “doer,” and about the losses or vices of the condition of being “only a hearer.” Therefore, the firm faith that things are in a certain way makes man become a doer of the word.

The author of the epistle highlights two main motivations why somebody should desire to become a “doer” of the word. First of all, James demonstrates that the people who choose to be “only hearers” of the word, in fact, deceive themselves (παραλογιζόμενοι ἑαυτούς – deceiving yourselves) fatally. How exactly do they deceive themselves? In order to diminish the degree of *vagueness* of this idea, one must observe that there is a *similarity* between the idea denoted by the words παραλογιζόμενοι ἑαυτούς (deceiving yourselves) in this text and the one denoted both by Μὴ πλανᾶσθε (do not be misled) in 1:16, and by ἀπατῶν καρδίαν (deceiving [the] heart) in 1:26. The fact that every 10 verses the author asks expressly and warns repeatedly regarding the danger of self-deceiving shows, on the one hand, the tendency of the readers to self-deceive, and on the other hand, the author’s concern to protect his recipients from this undesired situation. In other words, the one who only listens to the word, and does not act as such, is in an unacceptable situation.

Manton says that παραλογιζόμενοι 'is a term of art', which implies the idea of a precarious argument.⁷⁴⁴ To what extent, then, do those who only hear the word and do not fulfil it, rely on an argument which is neither rational nor based on evidence? A valid *hypothesis*, which can explain the usage of this term, would be that some believers considered that they were having a good relationship to God while they were despising his teachings, which obviously placed them in the condition of a "potentially fatal self-delusion."⁷⁴⁵ The circumstances in which they were lie in the fact that they were participating, perhaps with ardour, at the reading of the word regularly, while they were refraining from carrying out the laws of the divine word. Consequently, these "only hearers" of the word were deceiving themselves if they thought they were truly right with God whereas they were truly disobedient or indifferent to him.

The fulfilment in act of the word implanted is *rendered too* in Jesus' teaching described by Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20 and Luke 8:4-18 in the Parable of the Sower. This parable underscores the existence of three cases where the Word is inefficient due to the lack of attitude or predisposition of doing (ποιητής) of the ones in whom the word was planted. Not all the types of ground, in Matthew's presentation, enjoy the quality of ποιητής. In his terms, only one kind of soil has the ability to bear fruit (ποιέω): "ὁ τὸν λόγον ἀκούων καὶ συνιείς, ὃς δὴ καρποφορεῖ καὶ ποιεῖ . . ." ⁷⁴⁶ The other soils, different from the fruitful (ποιεῖ) or fulfilling one (ποιητής) are the following: 1. The one that hears the Word and does not understand it ("ἀκούοντος τὸν λόγον τῆς βασιλείας καὶ μὴ συνιέντος"), ⁷⁴⁷ 2. Those who hear the word, receive it but 'they

⁷⁴⁴ Manton, *A Practical Commentary*, 132.

⁷⁴⁵ Moo, *James*, 86.

⁷⁴⁶ Matthew 13:23.

⁷⁴⁷ Matthew 13:19.

immediately fall away' ("ὁ τὸν λόγον ἀκούων καὶ εὐθὺς μετὰ χαρᾶς λαμβάνων αὐτόν . . . εὐθὺς σκανδαλίζεται."),⁷⁴⁸ and 3. The one that hears, but becomes unfruitful (ὁ τὸν λόγον ἀκούων, καὶ . . . ἄκαρπος γίνεται).⁷⁴⁹ By the idiomatic *similarity* interceded by the words "implanted word," and the 'seed fell on good soil' we can *conjecture* that there is a connection between James and Jesus.⁷⁵⁰ It is obvious that the third type (no. 3) of ground is *also* openly attacked by the author of the epistle when he says: "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."⁷⁵¹ The correspondence between James and Jesus is rendered *too* by the resemblance between this section in the epistle and the parable of the house on the rock, rendered both by Matthew in 7:21-27 and Luke in 6:46-49. The two evangelists expose the *same* idea, in almost *similar* terms (ποιῶν and ποιήσας in Gospels - ποιηταὶ in James), with the *same* accents as those of James in 1:22-25. In the texts of the evangelists there is presented the unhappy and unacceptable option of hearing the word without fulfilling it: "καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀκούων μου τοὺς λόγους τούτους καὶ μὴ ποιῶν αὐτούς . . ."⁷⁵² and "ὁ δὲ ἀκούσας καὶ μὴ ποιήσας . . ."⁷⁵³ Jesus' teaching here, according to which the man who hears the Word must also do it, is obviously *similar* to that of James according to which the one who hears the Word implanted must also be its doer, otherwise, this man, deceives himself painfully. Subsequently, it is evident that James is in the *same* line of thought as that of Jesus.

In order to show the abnormal situation of the one who "only hears" the word, James resorts in verses 23 and 24 to the illustration of

⁷⁴⁸ Matthew 13:20, 21.

⁷⁴⁹ Matthew 13:22.

⁷⁵⁰ Luke 8:15.

⁷⁵¹ James 1:22.

⁷⁵² Matthew 7:26.

⁷⁵³ Luke 6:49.

looking into the mirror. The person who hears the word and does not fulfil it is therefore identified as the man who looks at himself carefully (κατανοοῦντι) in a mirror in order to see the reflection of his face (τὸ πρόσωπον).⁷⁵⁴ The modern concept about the mirror is different from the antique one, the latter being relatively *vague* and distant.⁷⁵⁵ *Similar* terms with the one used by James for “mirror” (ἔσοπτρον) may be encountered only once in the New Testament (1 Cor. 13:12) and twice in the Septuagint: Wsd. 7:26 and Sir. 12:11. What is important to note is that in the texts from 1 Cor. 13 and Sir. 12, we can notice that the mirror has a dim and warped reflection and which, in order to reflect well enough, has to be polished for a long time, without, however, the acquiring of a perfect and lasting reflexion.⁷⁵⁶ As a consequence of this, as James notices in 1:24 and 25, the person who wanted to see the reflexion of his face in the mirror had to “look intently” (κατενόησεν and παρακύψας), otherwise said, he had to look carefully, deliberately and insistently, looking for a good reflection of his face. What should normally come next would be for that person to act as a consequence of what they see in their reflected face. Martin says: “What is seen in the mirror is meant to lead to action, usually regarded as remedial. The face is seen to be dirty (going back to v 21) or blemished and needing attention.”⁷⁵⁷ The dramatic situation remarked by James consists in the very fact that the person who watched himself in the mirror “goes away and at once forgets what he was like.” This very spiritual amnesia is condemned by James. The person who looks at themselves in the mirror forgets about themselves or is ignorant (καὶ εὐθέως ἐπελάθετο ὅποῖος ἦν) and, therefore, does not act to restore anything. As the amnesia or the ignorance is an

⁷⁵⁴ James 1:23.

⁷⁵⁵ Blomberg and Kamell, *James*, 90.

⁷⁵⁶ cf. McCartney, *James*, 120-121.

⁷⁵⁷ Martin, *James*, 50.

abnormality, or a deep suffering in the same way the ignorance or forgetfulness of the one who sees his moral face in the reflexion of the divine word and does not act to restore something is in a spiritual suffering. Consequently, the one who only hears the word and does not fulfil it, is not in a spiritually normal situation. This illustration is meant to persuade the recipient of the epistle to quit the option of only hearing the word, and enrol himself on the correct path of normality of those who become hearers and doers of the word.

Another motivation to become a doer is underlined by James in verse 25. The one who is a doer “will be blessed in his doing.” This is, however, characterised by the fact that he “looks intently” in the perfect Law, and continues to show his interest in it. The blessing which flows from the attention paid to the Law as a doer, and not as a hearer only, lies in the very success of fulfilling the thing required by the Law. Kamell stresses this, saying that “this is not an eschatological blessing, but the promise of personal fulfilment in the very process of doing what believers know to be right.”⁷⁵⁸ Nevertheless, McCartney draws the attention that even if the verb “will be” (ἔσται) may point to a gnomic future, which is rarely used, nevertheless, given the eschatological orientation of James, highlighted in texts such as 1:11-12, 5:7, the blessing to which the author refers could consist in the future approval of God at the final judgment, offered to all those who obey him acting in conformity with his word.⁷⁵⁹

In verses 26 and 27, James describes someone’s religion based on external appearances and not on what someone affirms about themselves. The verb “seem, think” (δοκέω) implies a subjective judgment.⁷⁶⁰ Therefore, James wants to say that in case somebody

⁷⁵⁸ Blomberg and Kamell, *James*, 93.

⁷⁵⁹ McCartney, *James*, 124.

⁷⁶⁰ Blomberg and Kamell, *James*, 93.

believes about themselves that they are religious, without doing something regarding their unbridled and intemperate speech, then that man has a wrong opinion about himself. In case he trusts this opinion, an opinion which does not take concrete works into account, then this person “leads him/herself into error” (ἀπατῶν . . . ἑαυτοῦ). The author directs his listeners on the path of knowing their person, starting from their own concrete actions and not from proper, subjective and groundless opinions. It is not only the domain of language which indicates somebody’s religiosity, but also that of social relations. This is why James shows that pure religion lies in acting in favour of orphans and widows when they are in distress. ἐπισκέπτομαι does not mean only “to visit” but especially “to look upon.”⁷⁶¹ Adamson demonstrates that the rabbis were teaching that concern for orphans must be shown with the same pleasure with which somebody wants to enter the gates of the Lord.⁷⁶² A last thing that the author notices is that religion also consists in keeping oneself unstained by the world. Martin proves that “His [James] admonition is for the readers to retain and guard their distinctive ethos as practitioners of true piety.”⁷⁶³ Thus, the concern for not being defiled by worldly sins, as well as the positive social relations and the controlled language represents the author’s major preoccupation in the last part of the chapter. James will approach these spheres of human action more extensively in the following two chapters because, in his opinion, action denotes the measure of religiosity and its nature.

James’ interest is in preventing his audience from duplicity, while his purpose, expressed in 4:4-10, is to convince his addressees to self-evaluate and rectify their inner being, and works alike, drawing near to God without duplicity and definitively.

⁷⁶¹ Thayer, *A Greek Lexicon*, 242.

⁷⁶² Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, 86.

⁷⁶³ Martin, *James*, 53.

The addressive stage

The text's addressive function transforms James' imperative γίνεσθε δὲ ποιηταὶ (be doers) into a divine request addressed to the reader, in order to reproduce in action the word implanted. The fulfilment of this imperative means to adopt and perpetuate a mode of being, 'doer,' characterized both by the readiness to carry out the word's demands with passion. Any welching from adopting the condition of being 'doer', presupposes a strictly quantitative self-deception, and from the perspective of the text's addressive function, an ignorance of God's voice, which involves an interruption of God's creative communication with the reader. Both the referentiality of the text and its addressivity concern a community that is content with the comfort of only listening to the Word and appreciating its moral value.

The representation of the reader content with hearing the word through the image of a man who neglects his own face right after he looked carefully at his reflexion in the mirror also becomes one of God's ways of motivating readers to adopt the desirable attitude of 'fulfilment' and avoid the artificial one of exclusive hearing. A second manner through which the text motivates the reader addressively to do the word is the promise of happiness in 1:25 ("shall be blessed in his deed"). The fact that this promise is connected through the words Μακάριος - μακάριος and ποιεῖτε - ποιήσει with 1:12, 2:12 respectively, and the fact that both verses convey the idea of judgment and reward, can make us believe that the happiness that James promises, and God addresses, is one regarding the reward that the believer-doer will receive after successfully passing through the announced divine judgment.

Also, the addressivity of the paragraph 1:22-27 contains, towards the end, the paternal voice (Θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ) which explicates the vanity of affirming a religiosity contradicted by reproachable deeds, such as unruly speech. The target of addressivity in verse 27 is to show that religiosity resides especially in the actions undertaken for the benefit of others. In other words, religiosity is visible in the concrete setting of social interaction. The addressivity of this paragraph, consequently, presupposes that the reader will answer the divine voice expressed in the text, by accepting and concretely assuming the position of 'doer' of the word, the definite fulfilment of charitable acts and life sanctification. The assuming of these things stands for the reader's answer to God's subtle but real voice.

The integrative stage

The final cause which standardizes the reader's action is the blessing or happiness which resides, on the one hand, in the approval received from God at the final judgment, that the faithful reader clearly does not want to lose, and on the other hand, in the success as such of fulfilling the divine teaching required by the word. So the text entailed between 1:22 and 1:27 has, first of all, a soteriological significance because the imperative to become a doer of the word leads the believer on the path of salvation, and, secondly, has the meaning of spiritual accomplishment, as the reader will grasp that once he becomes a doer of the word, he will enroll in the happy category of those who fulfill clean and constructive works. The immediate effects of the text upon the faithful reader consist in rejecting the condition of unfruitful hearer of the word. By accepting the idea of becoming a doer of the word, he will attempt to grasp the teaching of the divine word carefully, minding to control his language, help the poor, keep unchanged and protect his "distinctive ethos" as a practitioner of the truth.

5. Section two: the active faith in Community (2:1-26)

My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called? If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

5.1. On partiality (faith cannot be associated with bad works)

In this section, James asks his addressees, precisely, not to hold the faith in Lord Jesus while they favour consciously the rich to the detriment of the poor. The faith anchored in Jesus Christ and the favouring of the rich done with partiality, are not compatible one with another, and therefore, they cannot cohabit in the life of the believer

without his heart suffering acutely from duplicity, a deficiency that James emphasizes in chapter one as well.⁷⁶⁴

James' statement "My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory" is not clear enough for the contemporary reader. This requirement is *vaguely* owed to three aspects: in the first place the meaning of the terms 'to hold the faith', in the second place the meaning of the term 'partiality' and in the third place the meaning of this interdiction.

The phrase ἔχετε τὴν πίστιν translated by "to have faith" has a *cognate* correspondent in LXX of the word ἔχον πίστιν, which would be translated by 'to hold the faith' or 'to be faithful' or 'to be trustworthy'.⁷⁶⁵ In the New Testament, *this joining of terms* is translated by "to have faith" as it is otherwise given by the following texts: Matt. 17:20 WEB: "if you have faith as a grain of", Matt 21:21 WEB: "if you have faith, and don't doubt" ⁷⁶⁶ In case of 2:1, ἔχετε τὴν πίστιν cannot be translated by possessing faith, because in this case, James' interdiction would mean that he does not want us to own faith, which would contradict *other* verses in the epistle where the author promotes the ownership and exercise of faith explicitly, like 1:6, 2:5 and 5:15. Therefore, the author requires his readers not to hold that they believe in Lord Jesus while they commit partiality. The term 'partiality' (προσωποληψία) whose literal translation means 'to receive somebody according to his/her face' denotes the action of favouring somebody according to their aesthetic traits.

What is important to notice is that James' exhortation refers to forbidding the association of faith with the action of showing partiality:

⁷⁶⁴ James 1:7-8.

⁷⁶⁵ McCartney, *James*, 135.

⁷⁶⁶ Other texts which entail the terms ἔχον πίστιν are: Mk. 4:40 and Lk. 17:6 (ἔχετε πίστιν).

you are not supposed to hold your faith with bias (μὴ ἐν προσωπολημψίαις ἔχετε τὴν πίστιν). This interdiction of associating faith with partiality can be understood especially if one takes into consideration a certain incompatibility between them.

The antithesis between faith in Jesus and appreciating the rich according to appearances, which leads implicitly to the discrimination of the poor, derives, given the author's explanations, from the understanding of four real things: Firstly, the continuity between mind and actions, discriminative behaviour points out the determinative existence of evil thoughts (vv. 2-4). Secondly, God's manner of evaluating the poor is distinctly different from that of the believer who, in a wrong way, discriminates his neighbour unscrupulously (vv. 5-7). Here James accuses the frail analysis based on taking into account appearances. Thirdly, fulfilling the imperial law, "love thy neighbour," does not leave any room for the discrimination of the poor (vv. 8-11), on the contrary, it imposes love of the neighbour in spite of any situations and circumstances. Fourthly, the favouring of the poor is an action opposite to the mercy that the believer should show toward the helpless one, mostly because "mercy triumphs over judgment" (vv. 12, 13).

I. Faith in Jesus is incongruent with partiality, as the judgment deprives, chiefly, the right of the poor to be regarded, received or judged equally within the Christian community. The author's statement forbids the acclamation of possessing faith (and hence its association with the unacceptable fact) in the case when the one who appreciates someone lets himself be influenced by appearances.

The noun "partiality" (προσωπολημψία) is used 4 times in the NT.⁷⁶⁷ Nonetheless, as Blomberg and Kamell show, the term

⁷⁶⁷ Rom. 2:11, Eph. 6:9, Col. 3:25 and James 2:1.

προσωποληψία seems to be a Semitism.⁷⁶⁸ Martin considers as well that the term

uses an OT expression that had gone through several stages of development ranging from an attitude of general acceptance to the idea of favouritism and unwonted preference. In the latter sense it characterized the wrongfulness of Israel's leaders, who inclined to favour the powerful rich and mighty and were therefore reproved . . .

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Johnson observes that the plural form (προσωπολημψίαις) "suggests not simply a general attitude but specific and repeated acts."⁷⁷⁰ This aspect is caught by NRSV too, which translates the term above keeping its plural form: "your acts of favouritism." The acts of favouritism that the author criticizes are rendered by the author once again in 2:3, employing the term ἐπιβλέψητε, whose translation can take the following forms: "look with favour" or "show respect" (Lv. 26:9), "show attention" (Nm. 12:10, 21:9, 2 Chr. 6:19), "look at" (1 Sm. 24:8, 2 Sm. 1:7), or "to appreciate" (1 Sm. 16:7), but, as Moo alleges, "often has the connotation of 'look at with favour,' 'have regard for' (as in both other occurrences of the word in the NT: Luke 1:48, 9:38)."⁷⁷¹ James explains what he means by partiality, using an example, maybe imaginary: two people enter the assembly of the Christians; one is dressed impressively well, wearing expensive accessories, the second one is dressed shabbily and seems to be poor. The Christians, in their ensemble, look with favour (ἐπιβλέψητε) at the presence of the rich person. Consequently, they offer a prominent seat (Σὺ κάθου ὧδε καλῶς) to the man with a splendid appearance (λαμπρὰν), while they offer an inferior seat (ὕπὸ τὸ ὑποπόδιόν μου) to

⁷⁶⁸ Blomberg and Kamell, *James*, 106.

⁷⁶⁹ Martin, *James*, 59.

⁷⁷⁰ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Letter of James: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 221.

⁷⁷¹ Moo, *The Letter of James*, 103.

the poor man. The fact of favouring the rich man, which by its effect determines the marginalization of the poor one, is called by James 'partiality'.

James continues his argumentation, highlighting the idea that the very action of public favouring is a sign which denotes an inner moral default. This is placed by James in the foreground by means of the rhetorical question in verse 4: "have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?" The obvious but negative action of favouring someone for the sake of the other one confirms the existence of an inner state, a thinking (διαλογισμῶν πονηρῶν) which is equally negative, a heart lacking compassion and equity. The thing that James brings to the reader's attention in verse 4 is the very fact that discriminative public actions express judgments marked by insensibility and malice. Therefore, the concrete action of favouring the rich man reveals the presence, in the intimate hall of the soul, of negative discriminatory thoughts. The author thus transposes the case of partiality in terms of the relationship between mind and behaviour, showing that any external action is a reflexion, from the inside, of the individual's moral judgments (διαλογισμῶν πονηρῶν).

This way one can explain why exactly the author underscores the incongruity between faith and partiality. If the deed characterized as partiality indicates a morally degraded thinking and these acts of partiality are associated with faith in Jesus Christ, then this faith is found, dangerously, in the proximity of evil thoughts, cohabiting unnaturally and creating the background of the forming of guileful behaviour. This man always oscillates, like the sea wave (1:6), between faith in Jesus Christ and the malice manifested toward his neighbour. No believer can act discriminatorily on a regular basis because this mode of being betrays the negativity of his heart, but an evil heart cannot live together with a faithful one, which, by its nature, is good and constructive. The author of

the epistle, in fact, does not ask his addressees to give up on possessing faith in Jesus Christ, but on accepting the unnatural tandem of faith and partiality. Faith and partiality cannot live under the same roof for the only reason that faith and evil thoughts cannot cohabit in peace or for a long time.

II. Secondly, the believer cannot say he has faith while he acts with partiality, because the faith is “in Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory”⁷⁷² and in God, about whom the author says explicitly in 1:13 that He “does not do evil,” therefore having faith in God who does not do evil, while doing evil regularly by the acts of partiality, shows an evident contradiction between the faith assumed and the works performed.

In verse 2:5, James indicates that God does not despise those who are “poor in the eyes of the world,” on the contrary he chooses them (ὁ Θεὸς ἐξελέξατο τοὺς πτωχοὺς) to make them “rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.” Still, the criterion in conformity with which God selects them is not centred at all around the way they appear in the eyes of the world but He chooses them according to the love they have for God (τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν). Consequently, God does not despise the poor ones, and since things are like this, then all those who believe in Him should do the same. In verse 6, however, James admonishes his addressees because they were performing contrary to his expectations: “But you have dishonored the poor man.”

In order to remove any misleading understanding of the way in which God assesses the rich, the author appeals to two rhetorical questions: “Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? Are they not the ones who blaspheme the

⁷⁷² James 2:1.

honourable name by which you were called?”⁷⁷³ Both of these questions expect a positive answer. McKnight adds the following: “The behaviours of the rich in 2:6-7 are both more intense than what we find in 2:2-3 and wholly inconsistent with following Jesus Christ.”⁷⁷⁴

Here the author puts the rich people into the foreground from the viewpoint of what they do and speak, using the following three verbs, all of them in the active indicative, thus emphasising the believers’ condition of victimhood: oppress you (καταδυναστεύουσιν), drag you (ἐλκουσιν) and blaspheme (βλασφημοῦσιν). Somebody’s evaluation from the point of view of the works that they do stands in striking contrast with the appreciation of somebody, made subjectively or only on the basis of appearances. James’ mode of evaluating a person is *similar* to the evaluation to which Jesus invites his followers, in the Gospel of Matthew in 7:15-20, to understand that “By their fruit you will recognize them.” Thus, both the liar prophets and the rich people are evaluated with respect to what they do. It is not the appearance which matters when one appreciates somebody, but the works they do and the words they utter.

III. Thirdly, James accedes to the argument of the Royal Law: “love thy neighbour as thyself.” The believer cannot claim he/she has the faith in Lord Jesus while he/she commits partiality. To reckon somebody as a person worthy of receiving a front seat, while somebody else is ignored and disadvantaged publicly, be it only for the only reason that he is poor, is sin (ἁμαρτίαν). In this case, the one who makes such a differentiation among people can be found again in the attitude of duplicity in which, on the one hand, he believes in Jesus Christ who cherishes all of them, and, on the other hand, he dishonours his neighbour. In this respect, faith in Jesus Christ and breaking the law are things that reject each other

⁷⁷³ James 2:6,7.

⁷⁷⁴ McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 197.

reciprocally. James blames this duplicity when he says in 3:11 that sweet and bitter water do not pour forth from the same spring. This duplicity actually evinces the unstable nature of the man mentioned. Consequently, the act of declaring the faith in “Lord Jesus Christ” while acting voluntarily with partiality is unacceptable.

The one who discriminates against his neighbour, James shows, is guilty of breaking the whole Law: “But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.”⁷⁷⁵ The author of the epistle explains in 2:10 that the man who commits partiality, by the very fact that he commits the sin of not loving his neighbour, treads down the entire Law because “whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.”⁷⁷⁶

The royal law is a whole and must be fully accomplished. In order to make this principle clear, James brings up two commandments. The first one concerns the interdiction to commit adultery, and the second one to kill. Even if refraining from the sin of adultery is laudable, nevertheless given the unity of the royal Law, in case the command to refrain from killing is broken, the one who breaks it makes himself a “transgressor of the Law” (γέγονας παραβάτης νόμου).

IV. Fourthly, faith in Jesus Christ does not match the action of discrimination, as the latter is short of any trace of mercy. The man who penalizes the poor is deprived of mercy. The lack of mercy (ἔλεος) is the more serious as mercy is essential for the believer’s survival on judgment day.

James begins verse 12 with the demand to speak and act responsibly. The responsibility of speech and works is influenced by the thought of the inevitable judgment. Nonetheless, the judgment is based

⁷⁷⁵ James 2:9.

⁷⁷⁶ James 2:10.

on a “law of liberty.” Both terms νόμου ([the] law) and ἐλευθερίας (of freedom) are clear, but their association alters the traditional understanding of the law, which makes its grasping relatively *vague*. Now, if we think that the term “liberty,” which was met also in 1:25, where it was also associated with the term “law,” so that together they would refer to the Old Testament law, reinterpreted by Jesus in the spirit of love and mercy, and if we take into consideration that this term is employed in a context where James incriminates the vile acts of discrimination, then the meaning of the “law of liberty,” in his context, may indicate the Old Testament law, understood from the perspective of Jesus Christ’s teaching, given to people so that, letting themselves motivated by the mercy and love required by it, and performing it, they might enjoy the release from the constraints of sin and death.⁷⁷⁷ Moo underscores this idea about the “law of liberty”:

We do need to remember, as we have shown repeatedly in this section . . . that the law in question here is not the OT law as such, but the OT as reinterpreted and imposed by Christ on his followers. And the idea that Christians will be judged on the basis of conformity to the will of God expressed in Christ’s teaching is found in many places in the NT. Jesus warned that he would judge “all the nations” at his return and reward only those who showed compassion to others (Matt. 25:31-46).⁷⁷⁸

Thus, the judgment is one which is made by Christ according to the standard of love and mercy, namely those who have practically shown mercy will receive mercy on the day of judgement. Therefore, James’ argument for upholding the incompatibility between faith and partiality can be resumed as follows: since the judgment is merciless for the unmerciful, and partiality denotes a lack of mercy (ἀνέλεος), then the

⁷⁷⁷ Martin, *James*, 220.

⁷⁷⁸ Moo, *The Letter of James*, 117.

divine judgment will be ruthless for the one who discriminates against his neighbour willingly and without remorse.

The addressive stage

In conformity with the addressive function of the sign, the Biblical text is not an inert instrument, but ‘the bearer of God’s voice’. The requirements that command impartiality,⁷⁷⁹ the verbal actions and the social behaviour which have to be undertaken, taking account of the imminent judgment,⁷⁸⁰ are unquestionable commands for the contemporary reader, ones that he has to assume and practise equally and without delay. The imperative in 2:12 is a double one. It concerns both speech and non-verbal action. Martin explains this as follows:

The double imperative (λαλεῖτε, ‘speak,’ and ποιεῖτε, ‘do, act’; note double use of οὕτως for emphasis) carries forward the idea that the readers must act in a positive way in order to be ‘doers of the word’ (1:22; 2:14-26). The present tense of the imperative suggests a call to make such speaking and doing habitual.⁷⁸¹

The reader of “the integrative semiotics” understands that not fulfilling God’s commands from 2:1 and 2:12 presupposes ignoring the One who speaks. It requires human deliberation and action. By this light, reading James 2:1-13 is not an easy activity of training, but an act of huge responsibility and commitment. The questions related to the moral nature of our thinking⁷⁸² have the fresh quality of God’s voice and bring with them the sensation of a dialogue in course of progress. By the questions related to the way in which God chooses (2:5) and the ones related to the works of the rich (2:6-7), the reader is introduced as well to

⁷⁷⁹ James 2:1.

⁷⁸⁰ James 2:12.

⁷⁸¹ Martin, *James*, 70.

⁷⁸² James 2:4.

a sphere of divine-human communication which creates the prerequisites of a prolific self- reflexivity. The exclamation “and you dishonour the poor”⁷⁸³ is meant to make the reader notice the critical spirit and the concrete truth of these words, and at the same time, to recognize the divine voice behind it. We cannot justify our discriminatory actions, there are too many dishonoured poor people!

Integrative stage

Obeying the imperative of impartiality may lead to triumph over the divine judgment.⁷⁸⁴ So the survival of the final judgment represents the *final cause* which normalizes the final understanding of the text. From the viewpoint of the effect that the text has upon the reader, this is a text with eschatological reverberations and a soteriological function too, supplying the reader with four levels of correction. Firstly, the reader will be aware that concrete abstaining from partiality, the factual love of neighbours according to the model of God, the complying with the Law in light of Christ’s interpretation, and the acting out of mercy will help him pass the moment of judgment successfully. All these four things *perceived* and adopted by the reader confer on the reader the chance to overcome God’s judgment.

From the outlook of the immediate *effect* of the text upon the reader, we can say that the text, by the concrete imperatives and the interrogations which invite us to self-reflexion, has an ecclesiastic or even a socially therapeutic character. In order that the reader should act in

⁷⁸³ James 2:6.

⁷⁸⁴ James 2:12-13.

accordance with James' prescripts in each one of the four levels of correction, he will admit that faith and partiality are not compatible; he will acknowledge the social and eschatological importance of love; he will realize that the faith in Christ cannot be associated with half measures as regards fulfilling the law and, lastly, he will desire to be merciful to the miserable. Consequently, the community of the readers of this text will not pass by the poor, but they will stop, asking what precisely they can do for them offering the poor possibility to integrate within the community, enjoying all the advantages as any other person. The text in 2:1-13 draws the reader to the poor constructively, giving him the 'Samaritan' commission.

5.2. Faith in Community (faith cannot be associated with abstaining from good works); James 2:14-26

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar. You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the

same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

5.3. A general presentation of the literary context of the section 2:14-26

There are five connecting words or ideas between 2:1-13 and 2:14-26 aroused by Martin. Truly, “The links between the two paragraphs are too strong to be overlooked.”⁷⁸⁵ For a clearer observation, I have placed them in a table:

Table 5. Martin's five connecting words

1	My brothers ... faith (2:1)	My brothers ... faith (2:14)
2	The poor person in filthy clothes (2:2)	A brother or sister ill-clad and lacking in daily sustenance [poorly clothed and lacking in daily food] (2:15)
3	The poor ... wealthy in faith ... (who) love God (2:5)	Faith ... works [two terms in association 10x in 13 vv].
4	You are right (καλῶς ποιεῖτε) (2:8)	Excellent! (καλῶς ποιεῖς) (2:19)
5	The fine name by which you have been <i>called</i> (2:7)	(Abraham) was <i>called</i> God's friend (2:23) ⁷⁸⁶

⁷⁸⁵ Martin, *James*, 78.

⁷⁸⁶ Martin, *James*, 78-79.

These linking words highlight the thematic and logical continuity between the first and second section of the second chapter.

Which is the hallmark of each of the two sections? After the author accuses in the first section of chapter two the performance of evil works - especially partiality - by those who claimed they believed in God, proving that the faith they were acclaiming could not go hand in hand with the bad works they were doing, in the second section James insists on demonstrating that the faith they pretended to have, could not connect with abstaining from doing good works. Therefore, the author wants to certify that faith without works (namely good ones) is dead or useless, which neither helps others, nor does it qualify itself for salvation. So, by means of both sections James attacks vehemently the opinion that somebody can believe in Christ even though they do repugnant deeds or they abstain from doing the desirable and right ones. If we accept the *hypothesis* that James' recipients consider it is admissible to believe in Christ and perform bad works or refrain from doing the good ones, then the author's firm position from chapter 2 would be a *matter of course*.

I have to show here that the formula "faith without works" (ἡ πίστις χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων in 2:20), repeated by the author in various ways, will not be understood as "faith detached from works," in the sense that they are two distinct entities, because, first of all, there does not exist such a mindset, either in Hebrew culture (according to Dibelius' commentary, faith and works are an indivisible unit), or in the Epistle of James (in James, faith and works are in synergic unity). On the contrary, in light of Jewish religious culture and the concept of synergic unity recalled by the author in 2:22, we may realize that this formula refers to the faith which does not have good works, refusing to perform these works on purpose. This faith is useless (ἀργή) or dead (νεκρόν). Secondly, since James evinces that faith which does not perform works, does not lead to salvation, and salvation implies carrying out positive verbal and social

actions resulting from mercy – with which faith cohabits - not from ‘evil thoughts’, then the works (ἔργα), which are missing from the declared faith (ἐὰν πίστιν λέγῃ τις ἔχειν - if someone says he has faith), have to be perceived as positive and desirable. Thirdly, the second section of chapter two allows this approach, as I am going to demonstrate in the following commentary.

5.3.1. An excursus on the πίστις - ἔργο synergic pair

The section encompassed between 2:14 and 2:26 summons explicitly the unity πίστις - ἔργον. The verse which stresses the nature of this unity is 2:22, where the author endorses the synergic relationship saying: “You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.” The term συνεργέω has only two *similar* occurrences in LXX (1 Mc. 12:1 and 1 Esd. 7:2) and another four in the New Testament. None of these uses is, though, συνεργέω fructified with the purpose of explaining any structural unity on the whole, theological or anthropological, and neither of them is employed in order to testify to the close cooperation between faith and works like in James’ case. The author of the epistle in discussion is the only author of the NT who sets this term in order to decrypt the intimate unity of the pair πίστις - ἔργον. “Working together” (συνήργει) implies therefore a structural congeniality, a natural kinship.

The Greek term that is translated in English by ‘faith’ is πίστις and can be found 59 times in LXX by means of 7 inflections.⁷⁸⁷ For the word ‘deed,’ the author utilizes the term ἔργον. This one occurs 591 times in

⁷⁸⁷ Rahlfs, ed., *Rahlfs’ Septuagint*, exported from BibleWorks 8 Electronic Edition, July 7, 2015.

LXX resorting to 6 inflections.⁷⁸⁸ What we have to observe is that the terms πίστις and ἔργον are located in the proximity of another in about 9 places in the Septuagint. Out of these nine texts only three times is the relationship of unity between faith and works shown. In the text in 2 Kings 12:15 (4 Kings 12:16, in LXX) 'the work' is qualified by the author as being anchored *in faith/faithfulness*, also the workers asked to restore the House of the Lord have done the work faithfully as 2 Chr 34:12 shows. Not only the people but also God is placed in a light in which, Ps 33:4 (32:4, LXX) indicates, actions are performed on the grounds of faith/faithfulness (πάντα τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ ἐν πίστει). Here we must specify that all of God's acts are fulfilled into his faithfulness.

The common denominator of the three texts lies in the consideration that deeds recover and grow up from the faith's clean and productive soil. Good acts are not only placed in a welcoming and warm light, but they are also viewed as part of the faith and they actually denote faithfulness.

One of the reasons why the Old Testament does not associate faith and works as two separate entities resides in the fact that, as David Hill mentions, in Judaism there is "no place for the rigid distinction between faith and works: faith can only fully exist when it is embodied in works."⁷⁸⁹ Consequently, it seems very probable for James to have been influenced by the Jewish concept of faith in act (or act marked by faith), faithfulness, since he displays faith and works in a synergic functional unity, where faith is embodied in deeds, and good works are carried out faithfully. This representation of the relationship between internality and externality is entailed by Peirce's phenomenology too, according to

⁷⁸⁸ Rahlfs, ed., *Rahlfs' Septuagint*, exported from BibleWorks 8 Electronic Edition, July 7, 2015.

⁷⁸⁹ David Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings: Studies in the Semantics of Soteriological Terms* (London, New York: Cambridge University Press Archive, 1967), 145 (footnote 1).

which, as I have already mentioned, neither thinking can be conceived without compulsion and quality, nor regular action without reason and possibility.

The quantitative stage

Verse 14 exhibits the theme with which the author deals in verses 14-26, which is the futility of faith without works.

As concerns the contents of verse 14, Blomberg and Kamell notice both the *similarity* between faith without works from 2:14, and the vain religion in 1:26-27 as well as the continuity between true faith and good works from the soteriological viewpoint as follows:

Workless faith resembles the vain religion of 1:26-27. On the one hand, the person claiming to be a believer but displaying no works cannot be saved, just as the rich oppressor will be eternally judged (5:3-4). Those who demonstrate true faith through their good works, on the other hand, will be exalted⁷⁹⁰

Martin draws our attention to the fact that τί τὸ ὄφελος (what good is it), from the beginning of verse 14, appears to fight a certain misunderstanding.⁷⁹¹ This misunderstanding that James tackles is quite *vague*. Martin thinks that it is related to the nature of faith.⁷⁹² Davids considers that this confusion refers to the saving function of a certain kind of faith.⁷⁹³ Ropes believes that James signals the contrast between a mere adherence to Christianity and one's personal conduct.⁷⁹⁴ If we took into

⁷⁹⁰ Blomberg and Kamell, *James*, 125.

⁷⁹¹ Martin, *James*, 80.

⁷⁹² Martin, *James*, 80.

⁷⁹³ Davids, *The Epistle of James*, 120.

⁷⁹⁴ Ropes, *A Critical and exegetical*, 204.

account the hypothesis that James corrects the wrong understanding that somebody can pretend they believe in Christ (adheres to Christ) whereas they refrain from doing good (has a passive mode of conduct), then the illustration which comes next in 2:15-16 would be a *matter of course*. In other words, if we considered that James incriminates somebody's expectation (λέγει) that they believe in Christ and will be saved even though they abstain from doing good, then the illustration with the person who sees the imperious needs of the poor without doing anything for their benefit would be suitable. This hypothesis envisages two aspects: 1. The mindset of faith of James' recipients is one where faith is one with works; 2. The attitude of the addressees to refraining from doing good or even programmatic evil-doing was a lax one; evil-doing was seen as something normal and acceptable.

Thus, in verse 14, the author asks his recipients rhetorically regarding the soteriological function of the faith which abstains from doing good. The word ἔργα, Ropes shows "seems here a recognised term for 'good deeds.'"⁷⁹⁵

Soon after the rhetorical question referring to the soteriological usefulness of faith, James gives the example of a person in the assembly (ἐξ ὑμῶν) who notices another person from the believers' community, brother or sister (ἀδελφὸς ἢ ἀδελφή), in their state of crass poverty regarding the daily clothing and food (γυμνοὶ ὑπάρχουσιν καὶ λειπόμενοι τῆς ἐφημέρου τροφῆς). The gravity of his/her suffering and the need that requires action on behalf of the observer are so highly serious, as the person in this case is not a distant or unknown neighbour but a member in the spiritual body of the community, present in that spot and known by them. The one who observes the precarious state of their neighbour, addresses his/her words which appear to denote care and compassion

⁷⁹⁵ Ropes, *A Critical and exegetical*, 204.

(*“Go in peace, be warmed and filled,”*), but does not undertake anything in order to calm him/her down, by dressing or feeding him/her. These words, Moo points out, are a mode of addressing, “a familiar Jewish form of dismissal; NEB and Philips capture the sense well: ‘Good luck to you’.”⁷⁹⁶ The present at the middle voice both of the word θερμαίνεσθε (be warmed) and χορτάζεσθε (be filled) describes the striking and illogical expectation of the one who notices the suffering of seeing their neighbour warming themselves on their own and feeding themselves until satiation (χορτάζω). The assertions detached from action, no matter how pious their manner of addressing and how noble their intentions are, cannot either feed or warm anybody. Related to this example, the author raises a question that draws the reader’s attention: what is the use of a man to say some good words to a poor person if he does not offer them a helping hand?

The fact that James employs here both the interrogation “τί” and the noun “ὄφελος” (profit, benefit)⁷⁹⁷ of the neuter gender, shows that the usefulness of words without works does not concern only the one who addresses these words, but it concerns both him and the hearer to the same extent. An apparently good word disjointed from good works is not useful (τί τὸ ὄφελος) either to the person who addresses these words, or, even sadder, to the naked and hungry man who is a restless recipient of some redundant, cheap and sterile words. The message of the rhetorical question, which is a common exercise among James’ contemporary writers, has the task of pointing out that as words without works are sterile, likewise faith without works is sterile, inactive, or, in James’ terms, dead. Therefore, the phrase “dead faith” does not mean a theoretical faith but a false one. Luther argues in favour of this interpretation as follows:

⁷⁹⁶ Moo, *James*, 106.

⁷⁹⁷ Thayer, *A Greek-English*, 469.

See, this is what James means when he says, 2, 26: 'Faith apart from works is dead.' For as the body without the soul is dead, so is faith without works. Not that faith is in man and does not work, which is impossible. For faith is a living, active thing. But in order that men may not deceive themselves and think they have faith when they have not, they are to examine their works, whether they also love their neighbours and do good to them. If they do this, it is a sign that they have a true faith. If they do not do this, they only have the sound of faith, and it is with them as the one who sees himself in the glass and when he leaves it and sees himself no more, but sees other things, forgets the face in the glass, as James says in his first chapter, verses 23-24.⁷⁹⁸

The absence of works is an eloquent sign of a faith which has a different nature, a faith in anything but Christ, or the value of his principles. In another section of his work, but in the same order of ideas, Luther accentuates even more that the omission of good works is not at all a feature of faith working through love; it is, on the contrary, a void faith:

Therefore St. James means to say: Beware, if your life is not in the service of others, and you live for yourself, and care nothing for your neighbour, then your faith is certainly nothing: for it does not do what Christ has done for him. Yea, he does not believe that Christ has done good to him, or he would not omit to do good to his neighbour.⁷⁹⁹

The dead faith (νεκρά ἐστίν) is a passive faith toward the needs of his fellows. This faith distinguishes itself by withdrawing, fully consciously, from the sphere of philanthropy and obedience to God's norms.

So there are two aspects underscored by James in 2:14-17: the first one is represented by the fact that the absence of works evinces what the nature of faith is ("So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.") and secondly, the omission of good works is not a

⁷⁹⁸ Lenker, *The Precious and Sacred Writings of Martin Luther*, vol XIV, 71-72.

⁷⁹⁹ Lenker, *The Precious and Sacred Writings of Martin Luther*, vol XIV, 72.

positive thing, but a negative and unacceptable one. James reiterates the omission of good works in 4:17 demonstrating that in case someone “knows the good he ought to do and fails to do it,” in fact, they commit a bad thing (ἁμαρτία). The omission of good works is nevertheless an action, but a wrong one.

James has the concept of *faith in action* only. As Antony Thiselton points out in his discussion about the relationship between Paul and James, and the interrelation and fusion between New Testament texts and the horizon of modern interpretation (like that of Wittgenstein),

the very concept of faith entails action in a certain way.

. . . .

Belief is not simply a mental state. It is no more possible to abstract believing from attitudes and actions than it is to extract the utterance “I promise” from questions about one’s future conduct.⁸⁰⁰

Thus, it does not matter whether we talk about the faith which does good works or the faith that refrains from good works, we speak about faith *in action*. Again, if a faith does not help or omits to do good works, although circumstances require them, then it commits something bad (ἁμαρτία). It commits an act by omission. And if it does a bad thing (sin), by omission, then this faith is one which, according to James, does not produce life, it is a dead faith. Moreover, faith in God is active in a good sense, whereas dead faith is active in the way that, without any trace of mercy, it withdraws from doing good to others. This faith does not trust in God’s principles. Thus, the author’s effort does not consist in making his readers do works, but in helping them not to deceive themselves thinking their belief is right while not performing good works ‘consistently.’ The very act of abstaining from doing good indicates a faith

⁸⁰⁰ Anthony C. Thiselton, *Thiselton on Hermeneutics, Collected Works with New Essays* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, UK: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 161 and 162.

anchored in something else other than God's teachings, because his teachings accuse a refraining from doing good. And when somebody abstains deliberately from doing good, they deceive themselves if they believe they are followers of Christ. James' concern to help his readers not deceive themselves is proven by 1:16, 1:22 and 1:26.

In verse 18 James begins with the adversative conjunction "Ἀλλ' " ("But").⁸⁰¹ Usually, this brings along an objection to somebody's idea or position. Both Martin and Moo remind us that Dibelius considers this verse to be one of the most difficult passages in the New Testament.⁸⁰² Both the logic of the verse and the participants in the dialogue are *vague* issues. Calvin expresses the function of the adversative conjunction as follows:

Then *alla* I take for "nay rather;" and *tis* for "any one;" for the design of James was to expose the foolish boasting of those who imagined that they had faith when by their life they shewed that they were unbelievers; for he intimates that it would be easy for all the godly who led a holy life to strip hypocrites of that boasting with which they were inflated.⁸⁰³

A *hypothesis* that could account for the initial conjunction in 2:18 would be that James thinks of a believer who rejects his preceding argument concerning the utility of faith, continuing to claim obstinately that he has faith in God, even if he refrains from doing good. Against this obstinacy the author imagines a person in the assembly who takes his side, using the argument described in verse 18. Otherwise said,

⁸⁰¹ Thayer, *A Greek-English*, 27.

⁸⁰² Moo, *The Letter of James*, 127; Martin, *James*, 87.

⁸⁰³ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, trans. Rev. John Owen, (New York: Cosimo, Inc., 2007), 291.

James would use the adversative conjunction as follows: you do not want to understand, but (ἀλλ') "somebody will say."⁸⁰⁴

In this respect, the personal pronoun "σὺ" (you) concerns the sceptical believer. And the pronoun ἐγώ (I) in the condensed conjunction, καὶγὼ, represents the imaginary speaker. The words: "you have faith and I have works" can mean that the interlocutor addresses the sceptical believer by: "let us admit that you really have faith in God, not a faith which is dead, and I have good works." What follows is a new challenge for the believer who affirms he, nevertheless, possesses a good faith, faith in God, a lively faith, even if he lacks good works: "Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works." Or, differently put, demonstrate to me (δείξόν μοι) that your faith without works is in God, and I will prove you, by my works, that mine is truly in God.

⁸⁰⁴ There are several interpretations referring to the person who argues in verse 18. The first interpretation, to which the present work approaches, endorses the fact that the person who argues against focusing on faith would be an ally of James. This opinion is shared by Mayor, *The Epistle*, 99-100, Adamson, *The Epistle*, 124-125, Martin, *James*, 86-87. The advantage of this endorsement resides in the fact that the pronouns "you" and "I" (σὺ and καὶγὼ [καὶ] ἐγώ) with respect to the opponent, respectively to James' ally, matches the meaning of the verse. The disadvantage would be that the conjunction at the beginning of the verse is translated by "indeed" instead of "but" which contradicts the etymological rules of using the adversative conjunction. The second interpretation upholds that James presents the words of a person who has objections related to their argument. In this case the adversative "but" is the word which introduces the objection brought against the author. This interpretation justifies the use of the adversative conjunction, but it has problems with the new meaning given to the verse, from where it results that the pronoun "you" refers to James and "I" to his opponent, and also that James is regarded as a person who has faith while his critical opponent is a person who has works. Such an approach suffers from a fault of coherence with the previous and the upcoming verses. (Martin, *James*, 86 – 87, Moo, *The Letter*, 129). The third way of approaching the verse accounts for the idea that an imaginary objector makes direct references to certain people wanting to demonstrate that some people have faith whereas others only works, dwelling upon the idea that faith and works are distinct gifts of the Holy Spirit. Even if this approach justifies the use of the conjunction without compromising its etymological adversative character, nonetheless this approach does not have a contextual support and it is grammatically unsubstantial (Martin, *James*, 87).

This challenge has the flavour of a verification and unfolds in two ways, an interrogative one and an exemplificative one. The interrogative way sounds like this: "How can you show me your faith if you don't have good deeds?" (NLT), or "Show me your faith apart from your works" (ESV), and it can be paraphrased as follows: explain to me how faith without works exists! The exemplificative and real way is the one by which the interlocutor gives himself as an example showing that he can point out or explicate (δείξω) his faith by means of his works: "I will show you my faith by my good deeds." (NLT) or "I will show you my faith by my works" (ESV). This challenge is still one whose core is *vague*. In the subsequent verses does James bring a series of arguments which back up the idea that good works performed regularly may constitute the evidence of the reality of faith in God, whereas the absence of good works, as well as the presence of bad deeds, refutes the idea of the presence of faith in God.

Thus, on what grounds can anyone demonstrate their faith by means of works? Something that would bring clarity to this issue is the *similitude* between ἐκ τῶν ἔργων (by the works) in 2:18 and ἐξ ἔργων (by works) in 2:21 and ἐκ τῶν ἔργων (by the works) in 2:22. The phrases "by works" and "by the works" refer to the works found in synergic unity with faith. Therefore, if James uses exactly the same words in verse 2:18 as in the verses where he speaks about the synergy faith-works, then it is very probable for him to have had in view that somebody's faith can be deduced when accepting that faith and works are in synergic unity. Faith shares its quality with the works that it trains. Had we admitted this idea, the statement in 2:18 "I will show you my faith by my works" would be a *matter of course*. Only due to the fact that faith is in a synergic relationship with works, namely that they share the same ground, can one demonstrate the quality of faith from the quality of works. The verb "show," Moo highlights,

is usually taken to mean ‘make visible’; cf. NLT: ‘I can’t see your faith if you don’t have good deeds.’ This is the normal meaning of the verb (*deiknymi*) in the NT, so the interpretation is quite acceptable. But the verb can also mean ‘prove, demonstrate’ (e.g. Matt. 16:21; Acts 10:28), and the only other occurrence in James has this meaning: ‘Let [the wise person] on the basis of his good conduct that his works are done in the humility of wisdom.’ James, then, may not be challenging the objector to reveal faith by action, but to prove that he has faith by what he does – something that James himself is fully prepared to do.⁸⁰⁵

Given the fact that one cannot overlook the truth that faith is emphasized by works themselves, the answer of the sceptical man to the challenge transmitted in the interrogative way could not be other but: I admit not being able to show my faith without works, therefore I need good works to prove that I have a good faith or, in other words, I ought not to say that I believe in God without doing good works.

But, for the very reason that there is not such an admission, James returns to the end of the argument of his imaginary interlocutor, in 2:20, asking with obvious indignation: “How foolish! Can’t you see that faith without good deeds is useless?” (NLT) or “Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?” (ESV). This ‘uselessness’ (ἀργή) is as serious as possible, in James’ opinion. This uselessness consists in the fact that faith without works is of no use for the believer, not even with regard to his salvation because the latter presupposes mercy and mercy cannot be fulfilled without the proper works required by God, and it is not useful to others either because it is a faith which refrains from doing good. Subsequently, this futile faith is a faith which acts by omission, in the context where the circumstances demand stringently to act by doing good, as Moo shows, “it does no ‘good’ (v.14), is ‘dead’ (vv. 17 and 26) and useless.”⁸⁰⁶

⁸⁰⁵ Moo, *The Letter of James*, 130.

⁸⁰⁶ Moo, *The Letter of James*, 132.

Before openly questioning the skeptical believer after these few arguments whether he has grasped that the faith which does not produce good works is not useful to the Christian who is called to integrate himself constructively in the ecclesial life of his community, and who will also have to present himself before the judgment which cannot be triumphed over without the mercy shown concretely to the “brothers” and “sisters” in faith, James lets his imaginary interlocutor deploy a second argument.

This second argument of the imaginary interlocutor in 2:19 comes from the field of demonology and is meant to point out that even the negative angels denote that faith is tightly connected to action and their action shows their faith.

The imaginary interlocutor advances the assertion that God is one (εἷς ἐστιν ὁ Θεός), and he underlines afterwards that this faith (σὺ πιστεύεις) is a good thing (καλῶς ποιεῖς). At this point James re-validates the Judaic belief in Deuteronomy 6:4 and confers it weight in the dogmatic ensemble of the Christian community. The element that has a major weight in the argument is the presentation of the fact that demons believe and shudder (τὰ δαιμόνια πιστεύουσιν καὶ φρίσσουσιν). What is surprising is the very faith of the demons in God’s unicity. Seeing that God is the only Lord, he is irreplaceable and unrivalled. Demons always remain inferior to God. This position of inferiority, considered under all aspects, causes shuddering (φρίσσουσιν). The term φρίσσω has at least 3 occurrences in The Greek Old Testament, LXX (Jdt. 16:10, Jb. 4:15, Jer. 2:12), just one in The Greek New Testament which is in James 2:19 and signifies the idea of quiver or tremble. The fact that the author binds πιστεύουσιν, an exponent of the human being’s internality, to φρίσσουσιν, a word which expresses an action in the present tense, active, indicative, by the conjunction καὶ, represents once again, on the one hand, the prism mind-matter by means of which James sees the problem, and on the other hand, the intention to display the intimate

unity of faith and deeds. The link between faith and works characterizes even negative spiritual beings.

The demons' ostentation of faith in action is chiefly emphasized by the unmasked fear of the demons. Their quiver in front of Jesus is rendered in particular by the demons' statements when seeing and recognizing Jesus' intention. In all the gospels is portrayed the close link between the demons' faith in Jesus' divine Supremacy (unicity) and their instant shudder. In what follows, I will quote both the words that prove demons' faith in God and their terrified and trembling reaction: "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?"⁸⁰⁷, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are -- the Holy One of God! . . . The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek."⁸⁰⁸ "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won't torture me!"⁸⁰⁹ "Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are -- the Holy One of God!"⁸¹⁰ The demons' conviction that God is One manifests inevitably and invariably. Now that James appeals to the register of demonology, he makes us believe that the demonstration of faith in deed is a universal reality of beings, both of spiritual and human ones, as James actually shows in the verses which follow verse 2:20. In conclusion, if faith is proven (δείκνυμι) in action and not even the basic fibre of the demons' being is exempt from this synergic unity, then faith cannot be considered apart from deeds. It is worth noting that the author uses the term ἀργή, besides the νεκρά from 2:17, to stress the apathetic condition of faith

⁸⁰⁷ Matthew 8:29.

⁸⁰⁸ Mark 1:24 and 26.

⁸⁰⁹ Mark 5:7.

⁸¹⁰ Luke 4:34.

which is devoid of the moral or spiritual competence to act beneficially and efficiently.

The present indicative (φρίσσουσιν)⁸¹¹ with which the verb φρίσσω is dressed expresses the present shudder of demons in front of God, which contrasts almost ironically with the indifference of the man who says: I believe that God is one (εἷς θεὸς ἔστιν) and I do not feel compelled to do good. Demons really believe that there is only one God and this makes them shudder and not look at him indifferently. They tremble because they cannot do more than that, they are not and cannot be saved. The urge in 4:8 “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you” is not addressed to them! Augustine comments on the relationship between the demons’ faith that God is going to judge them and their ineluctable tremble as follows: “as says the Apostle James, *the devils also believe, and tremble*: yet do they not hope or love; but rather what we hope for and love, they, in believing that it will come, dread.”⁸¹² Once demons get to believe that God has no counterpart, that He is the only God, they inevitably reach the situation when they cannot hide or abstain their shudder in any manner. The fact of shuddering comes implacably after the faith that there is only one God.

In verse 21 the author continues to back up the initial argument in order to convince the sceptical believer that faith without works is vain, and works, no matter which they may be, good ones or abstaining from doing good, demonstrates the nature of faith. The author’s intention would be to prove that it is not possible for anybody to believe in God while neglecting their living, because the moral quality of works demonstrates the real nature of faith. Thus, James appeals to two

⁸¹¹ Moulton, *The Analytical*, 492.

⁸¹² Saint Augustine, *Seventeen Short Treatises of S. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo* (Oxford: J.H. Parker; London: F. and J. Rivington, 1847), 90.

examples in the Old Testament to show that faith in God produces good works, and faith can be highlighted by good works.

In order to argue that faith works together with deeds, James employs the example of one of the most famous actions of the patriarch Abraham. The action to which the author refers is the one in which Abraham “offered up his son Isaac on the altar” (ESV).⁸¹³ The verb ἀνενέγκας, in the aorist participle,⁸¹⁴ denotes that at the very moment of offering his son as a sacrifice, Abraham “was shown to be right” (NLT) or “received God's approval as a result of what he did” (GWT). This stands for the fact that the judgment which was made was not carried out without taking into account his works. By what he did, Abraham was “proved right” or “shown to be right.” In other words, by what he did, the patriarch was proved to have the quality of a righteous man. There are texts, admittedly only a few, where the term δικαίω has the meaning of ‘to vindicate’ or ‘to approve’.⁸¹⁵ This verb occurs 59 times in the New Testament, but the form of passive aorist indicative is encountered 6 times.⁸¹⁶ Out of these times, ἐδικαιώθη is used both by Matthew 11:19 and Luke 7:35 with the meaning of “shown to be right” (NLT), “vindicated by” (NASB, ISV) or “proved to be right” (GWT). These texts could encourage a reading of the verb ἐδικαιώθη in the sense that it “was proved by” or “was vindicated by,” which is to say that the offering up of Isaac on the altar was the evidence on the basis of which one can reach the conclusion that Abraham has the quality of a righteous man

⁸¹³ One has to point out that James speaks about justification by deeds, using the plural, not justification by one deed, although he gives as example only one action, that of Isaac's offering up. Subsequently, justification does not focus on merely one deed, but on a complex of works.

⁸¹⁴ Moulton, *The Analytical*, 28.

⁸¹⁵ Moulton, *The Analytical*, 102.

⁸¹⁶ E. Nestle, B. Aland and K. Aland, ed., *Greek New Testament, Nestle-Aland 27th Edition* (Munster/Westphalia, Germany: American Bible Society, 1986) exported from Logos Bible Software 4, November 30, 2014.

(righteousness), a quality that, according to 2:23, is in harmony with faith. Therefore, as Luther admits in his introduction to the Epistle to the Romans, Abraham's works are external signs of his own righteousness. In his words:

On the other hand, if Abraham's circumcision was an external sign by which he showed the righteousness that was already his in faith, then all good works are only external signs which follow out of faith, and show, like good fruit, that man is already inwardly righteous before God.⁸¹⁷

If James gave this significance to the verb δικαιώ then "to be justified" would imply probation, vindication of a quality which cohabits with the deed that it actuates. If the righteous status is proved by performing good works, and this righteous status supposes faith in conformity with 2:23, then faith is proved by good works. And if faith is demonstrated by works, then it is obvious that there is a real relationship between works and faith.

The conclusion that James wants to reach in 2:22 "You see, his faith and his actions worked together" (NLT), fits very well with chapter two because, if there is a unity between faith and works then the sceptical believer is determined to admit that he cannot say anymore he believes in God but he does not care about works, issue to which 2:14-16 answers. As the deeds "show" the nature of faith (2:18-19), and if man's faith abstains from accomplishing good works, it means that his faith is a dead faith (2:17), a faith which does not secure righteousness and salvation to his soul (2:14b).

In this respect, there is no conflict between James and Paul. Paul thinks that somebody is justified to "enter in" the Kingdom by their faith in God, whereas James lays stress on the fact that somebody has proved that they are part of the Kingdom of God, according to good works, to

⁸¹⁷ Luther, *Commentary on Romans*, xx.

whose fulfilment faith contributes. Paul emphasizes that the condition by which God declares somebody's righteousness is faith, whereas James points out that the condition by which God proves that somebody is already righteous is good works. Still, for Paul, faith in God is the condition by which one can *accede* to the status of righteousness, and for James good works represent the fundamental criterion on the basis of which one can *verify* this status. Calvin, who wrote while inspired by the pre-modern spirit, defends the same point of view, indicating that

We have already said that James does not speak here of the cause of justification, or of the manner how men obtain righteousness, and this is plain to every one; but that his object was only to show that good works are always connected with faith; and, therefore, since he declares that Abraham was *justified by works*, he is speaking of the proof he gave of his justification. When, therefore, the Sophists set up James against Paul, they go astray through the ambiguous meaning of a term. When Paul says that we are justified by faith, he means no other thing than that by faith we are counted righteous before God. But James has quite another thing in view, even to show that he who professes that he has faith, must prove the reality of his faith by his works. Doubtless James did not mean to teach us here the ground on which our hope of salvation ought to rest; and it is this alone that Paul dwells upon.⁸¹⁸

In Paul, *righteousness is received* by faith, and in James *righteousness is seen* in works. As a consequence, James and Paul complete each other theologically and do not contradict reciprocally.

The faith-works relationship is denoted and explained by James at the same time through the term συνήγει (active, indicative),⁸¹⁹ "was working with." Abraham's faith and good works were working together

⁸¹⁸ Calvin, *Commentaries*, 314.

⁸¹⁹ Mouton, *The Analytical Greek*, 388.

continuously, namely the ‘fusion’ between faith and works was an ongoing reality.

The synergic continuity is highlighted by the active imperfect indicative form of the verb συνεργέω. Under this inflexion the verb is not used but once in LXX (1 Mc. 12:1)⁸²⁰ and once (συνεργεῖ) in the New Testament (Rom.8:28). “The imperfect form here emphasizes the ongoing nature of the “working together” (cf. HCSB: “faith was active together with his works”; and ESV: “faith was active along with his works”).”⁸²¹

It is however very important to observe that the verb συνεργέω expresses the equal ratio between the two elements involved in the synergic functioning. Otherwise said, this “working together” contrasts plainly with the principle of the supremacy of faith over works, but also with the overvaluing of deeds to the detriment of faith. James does not have the concept of faith separated from works even though we separate them at the level of mind, and he is far from the supremacy principle of one of these elements over the other.

Another assertion of James in 2:22 is comprised of the following words: “faith was completed by his works.” The term τελειόω, conjugated in the passive indicative aorist (ἐτελειώθη),⁸²² translated by “was made complete” or “was perfected,” has diverse interpretations. Ropes, for example, after he reviews a series of arguments, rightfully rejects the idea that faith was made perfect as though “before the works, it had been an imperfect kind of faith,”⁸²³ and holds that it is about the fact that faith was “almost ‘supplemented’ by works,” and “so enabled to do its proper

⁸²⁰ Rahlfs, ed., Rahlfs’ Septuagint, exported from Bible Works 8 Electronic Edition, July 7, 2015.

⁸²¹ Blomberg and Kamell, *Exegetical Commentary*, 137.

⁸²² Moulton, *The Analytical*, 170.

⁸²³ Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 220.

work.”⁸²⁴ A shortcoming of this approach lies in the fact that it sees works and faith as belonging to different spheres, looking at the former ones rather as some attachable accessories. The fact that the term τελειόω was not used anywhere in the New Testament under the form of passive aorist indicative creates difficulties in interpretations. Calvin indicates that faith is “proved to be true.”⁸²⁵ Although this meaning matches the context very well, nevertheless it does not have any correspondence in other writings, which determines us to have due reservations about the adoption of this meaning.⁸²⁶ Moo, comparing and employing the term τελειόω from James with the usage of the same term in 1 John 4:12 argues in favour of the idea that Abraham’s faith came to expression or “enriched its intended goal when the patriarch did what God was asking him to do.”⁸²⁷ If James bore in mind this meaning for ἐτελειώθη, then the synergism between faith and works and the fact that faith “received expression” by means of good works would match each other and converge towards proving James’ statement in 2:17 and 2:14, namely that faith without works is dead and if it is dead, which is to say if it does not produce good works, then it is a faith which refrains from doing works, hence a faith which does not lead to salvation. On the contrary, a faith which “receives expression” by the good works that it accommodates is a faith that leads to salvation.

Worthily, James addresses in 2:24, conclusively, all his addressees, showing that “a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.” Since faith cooperates inseparably with good works, by whose means it “receives expression,” then it is clear that man is justified or proved by

⁸²⁴ Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 220.

⁸²⁵ Calvin, *Commentaries*, 315.

⁸²⁶ Moo, *The Letter of James*, 137.

⁸²⁷ Moo, *The Letter of James*, 137.

the works that express faith and not by believing but not acting for others' benefit.

This reality concerns not only Abraham, Israel's patriarch, but any man. Perhaps this element made James give the example of the prostitute (ἡ πόρνη) Rahab who had a bad reputation and belonged to the Gentiles. Yet, as Moo notices,

So alongside the famous and celebrated ancestor of the Jewish people, a man, 'the friend of God,' he [James] places an obscure Gentile woman of low moral character. Thus he implies that anyone is capable of acting on his or her faith – whether a patriarch or a prostitute.⁸²⁸

Her works, by which the Hebrew spies were saved, demonstrated what exactly she believed in.

After Rahab's example, the author closes chapter two by saying that: "as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead." This verse can engender various and even extreme interpretations. In this verse, the author closes the series of arguments begun in 2:18 that he brings to support the idea that the absence of good works cannot prove faith in God. By virtue of the synergy between faith and works, however, James could hold that works may point out the nature of faith. So, he concludes with a last argument focused on the analogy between the synergic pairs body-breath and faith-works. A body without the regular action of breathing (πνεῦμα) is definitely a dead body, in the same way faith without the regular activity of good works is a dead faith which is not anchored in God durably. As opposed to this, a lively faith does good automatically. Luther remarks that the condition of faith is to produce works automatically, saying that it does not interrogate first whether good works must be done or not, "but before the question rises;

⁸²⁸ Moo, *The Letter of James*, 143.

it has already done them, and is always at the doing of them.”⁸²⁹ So when they do not exist in man’s life on a regular basis, anytime circumstances require them, it means that person who “does not these works is a faithless man.”⁸³⁰

The addressive stage

This central text section in the Epistle of James is the means by which God, the only God (2:19), as a merciful judge (2:13), addresses the reader. The assertions: “faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead,” “faith without good deeds is useless” and “the man is shown to be right with God by what he/she does, not by faith alone,” make God’s serious but friendly voice audible. The reader can hear its echo in the “hall” of his own judgment: It does not help either one, on the judgment day or in the community, if one pretends to believe in Christ while he/she refrains from doing good; refraining from good works denotes (spiritual) death, not life! Owning things (being rich) but not being useful to neighbours is a hard-to-bear responsibility. At this exegetical stage, the reader stays face to face with God and himself. James’ words become God’s words. The fact that I was not kind when circumstances were asking for it, and the possibilities were at hand, shows me that I have to convert my faith to one which is accepted by God, a faith which acts for the good of others.

The interrogations in 2:14-26 become God’s interrogations: “What good is it . . . if you say you have faith but don’t show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone?” (NLT), “what good is that?” (ESV), “Do you want to be shown”(ESV), “You see that a person is justified

⁸²⁹ Luther, *Commentary on Romans*, xvii.

⁸³⁰ Luther, *Commentary on Romans*, xvii.

by what he does and not by faith alone.” (NIV) According to integrative semiotics, the reader is aware that he has to answer the divine address, by reflexion, self-evaluation, deliberation, conversion to active faith and monitoring of that conversion. Thus, the reader’s silence would split the dialogue between him and God. The text in 2:14-26 has the function of not leaving workless faith unexamined and the consideration that it is all right not to do good uncorrected. The believer can realize, following his interaction with the text and his dialogue with God that by not doing good works he is self-deceived. His salvation is endangered and his community suffers because of his passivity. The role of the text is not to determine the readers to add good works, but mostly to help them identify their faith and make them trust in Christ, loving God and neighbours actively and consistently.

The integrative stage

The text in 2:14-26 is written under the auspices of the divine judgment, mentioned in 2:12-13, that none can elude, but over which everybody can be triumphant if he/she acts faithfully, mercifully and lovingly. The *final cause* of the interpretation resides, therefore, in salvation on the Day of Judgment. Concretely, the contribution of the text for the reader who wants his survival on that day consists in admitting that the pretence of trusting the one who does good, Christ, and the constant abstaining from doing good is a contradiction which must not characterise him/her.

In order that the reader may not be characterised by this contradiction, he/she will adopt the following actions, which are actually the immediate effects of the text or its *final interpretant*: the reader will

agree that, according to the faith-works synergy, refraining from doing good recalls a faith which does not lead to salvation. He/she will also accept the importance of adopting a real faith in Christ, a lively faith which will be underscored by the constant involvement in performing good to the people around them. In another order of ideas, the reader will be able to understand by listening to the suffering call of the world that he must get involved. Kamell renders this feeling when she quotes the following quotation from Motyer:

We should be relentless in pushing governments . . . to throw both economic and military caution to the winds in the face of the prior claims of human need. Meat mountains, butter mountains and powdered milk mountains are an offence to God and man if there is a hungry mouth in the world that can be filled through them. The pre-empting of the world's wealth for weapons of mass-destruction (whether "conventional" or nuclear) is blasphemy against the living God while those to whom he has given life die for want of food or medical care⁸³¹

In conclusion, the meaning of the text is soteriological and corrective. First of all, it aids the reader to remove the obstacle in the path of salvation, which lies in the faith that abstains with indifference from performing good, and secondly, the text makes the reader check and rectify the faith he/she has.

6. Section three. The believer in the sphere of communication (James 3:1-18)

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he

⁸³¹ Blomberg and Kamell, *Exegetical Commentary*, 143.

is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water. Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

[6.1. A succinct presentation of the theme in chapter 3 and the connection with previous sections](#)

The main idea of the present section of James resides in recalling duplicity as a major problem of speech, namely the propensity of any tongue to act constructively, but also to harm people and destroy relationships. James' attitude towards this state is peremptory: "these things ought not to be so."⁸³²

Concerning the link between this chapter and the previous ones, we can notice *general* resemblances of terms or ideas. These *resemblances* decrease the degree of *vagueness* of the chapter, namely it helps us to see chapter three as a moral, eschatological and theological reiteration of some topics discussed before, although he is now placing them in the realm of inter-human communication. If we analyze them in order, the ineluctable judgment of the teachers (κρίμα) in 3:1 *coincides* idiomatically with the merciless judgment (κρίσις/ κρίσεως) in 2:12. The perfect man in 3:2 (τέλειος ἄνθρωπος) makes us think of the imperative of perfection in 1:4 (ἢτε τέλειοι).⁸³³ The bridling of the tongue in 3:8 (γλῶσσαν οὐδεὶς δαμάσαι) makes reference to the taming of the tongue in 1:26 (χαλιναγωγῶν γλῶσσαν). The idea that the tongue/mouth blesses and curses duplicitously in 3:9-10 (εὐλογία καὶ κατάρα) is an echo of the duplicity incriminated by the author in 1:6 and 1:8 (διακρινόμενος/δίψυχος). The term wisdom (σοφίας) in 3:13 is the same as the one denoted for the wisdom (σοφίας) asked from God in 1:5.

Religiosity without tongue-control is deprived of any value as faith without good works lacks usefulness. The author's focus in chapter three seems to be on the diagnosis of the essential problem which vitiates communication among people, namely double-heartedness. The expected treatment cannot be found however in chapter three, only in chapter four, where the author stringently asks double-hearted people to cleanse

⁸³² James 3:10.

⁸³³ Blomberg and Kamell, *Exegetical Commentary*, 147.

and humble themselves, bearing away the devil and drawing close to God (4:10). Thus, chapter three aligns very well between the previous chapters and the fourth one.

The quantitative stage

Section 3:1-12 seems to have as its target the establishing of the fact that a person who puts their tongue in the guileful service of blessing and cursing is a critical mistake which, obviously, is not a feature of those who believe in God actively. Since Father “brought us forth by the word of truth”⁸³⁴ we cannot use the “word” (λόγος)⁸³⁵ to bless the Lord in a duplicitous and ruthless manner.⁸³⁶

This part of text can be divided in four sections. There is an introductive one, 3:1, where James reminds the believers’ community, of whom he feels he is an integral part, (ἀδελφοί μου), that there is an additional judgment which concerns especially those who are teachers. In the second section, comprised between verses 2 and 5, the author focuses on the idea that the tongue may create ample prejudices in case it is not bridled. The third section of this paragraph, 3:6-8, accounts for the very fact that the tongue, marked by wickedness, cannot be controlled. And, in the fourth part of this paragraph, 3:9-12, the author denounces the duplicity of the godless tongue and highlights its abnormality.

In verse one, James directs his attention towards those who fulfil the responsibility of teaching, asking them not to increase their number.

⁸³⁴ James 1:18.

⁸³⁵ James 3:2.

⁸³⁶ James 3:9.

This verse is one of the *vaguest* verses in the epistle in terms of the motivation which backs up this imperative. He does not either specify the proper number of teachers or explain the reason why not many of them “should become teachers.” Beside these, James indicates as well that teachers, among whom he also includes himself, will receive a greater judgment (μείζον κρίμα λημψόμεθα). Also, James is reserved in offering explanations regarding the reason why teachers will receive a “greater judgment,” but also what exactly this judgement consists of.

If we take into account the idea (hypothesis) that there were many believers who coveted the prominent status of teacher with all its benefits, without, however, having the moral qualifications demanded, then James’ command would obviously be a *matter of course*.⁸³⁷ As for example, Moo, making appeal to the social status of the rabbi, and reaching by analogy the prestige that the teachers in the Jewish Christian church would have enjoyed, thinks that too many believers were coveting the special position conferred by the status of teacher, which meant that “too many were seeking the status of teacher without the necessary moral (and perhaps also intellectual) qualifications.”⁸³⁸ McCartney, however, taking as example Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 23:9-10, Mark 12:40 and Luke 12:48, believes that James is dealing with that potential error of the teachers, which is “not so much doctrinal as moral”⁸³⁹ and which can bias both the image of the teacher and the moral profile of the student. Therefore, he shows, “James’s command that few should be teachers stands as a warning that the vocation of a teacher is dangerous.”⁸⁴⁰ Adamson binds James’ interdiction regarding the number of teachers with “the universal susceptibility of teachers to sin, in fact (as

⁸³⁷ cf. Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 226; Davids, *The Epistle of James* 136.

⁸³⁸ Moo, *The Letter*, 149.

⁸³⁹ McCartney, *James*, 179.

⁸⁴⁰ McCartney, *James*, 179.

he proceeds to underline), with the tongue: vv. 3-12 contain a bitter diatribe against it.”⁸⁴¹ McKnight believes that James prohibits teachers’ increasing their number because of the tendency that many of them have to take advantage of their charismatic authority “by saying the wrong thing at the wrong time to the wrong persons or about another person and so lead to the destruction of the delicate relationships that characterize the Christian community.”⁸⁴² Calvin explains James’ interdiction showing that it is due to the fact that there is a double vice among teachers; namely, the unselective acceptance of teachers, doubled by the lack of morality.⁸⁴³

The ‘greater judgement’, to which James refers, may envisage, according to Martin, the fact that teachers will be judged first of all as people, and after that as people who teach God’s lessons to other people, and cases when the manner in which they behave or the contents of the teaching makes the taught ones sin.⁸⁴⁴ Ropes evinces that the additional condemnation is due to the fact that the teacher, having a “clear and full knowledge of duty, he is the more bound to obey it, cf. Lk. 12:47f.”⁸⁴⁵

In conclusion, one can consider that James’ interdiction aims at preventing people from reaching the honourable position of teacher, when their speech and behaviour is not honourable at all.

In verse 2, the author affirms that the man who never fails in speech is perfect. The word “perfect” (τέλειος) is employed in order to show, Ropes thinks, a moral person. The moral state of perfection, which involves the lack of duplicity, is actually James’ target in 1:4, where he

⁸⁴¹ Adamson, *The Epistle*, 140.

⁸⁴² McKnight, *The Letter*, 271.

⁸⁴³ Calvin, *Commentaries*, 318.

⁸⁴⁴ Martin, *James*, 108.

⁸⁴⁵ Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 227.

uses the term τέλειοι *too*. Therefore, the one who never makes mistakes in speech is a man who has attained moral perfection. He goes on to say that the one who is perfect, by not erring in speech, is able to “bridle his whole body.” There is no link between controlling the tongue and controlling the body, since one knows from reality that speech does not have a direct, somatic effect upon the body, thus the control of speech does not necessarily lead to control of the body. Body (σῶμα), in LXX, *also* has the meaning of individual or even familial community. Genesis 47:12 employs the term σῶμα, meaning ‘family’. 1 Chr. 28:1 resorts to σῶμα in order to indicate the person of the king (σῶμα τοῦ βασιλέως). Job 33:17 uses the *same* term to refer to man in general, Job 33:24 uses the *same* meaning. But if we consider that σῶμα can refer to more than the somatic body then verse 2 could say that the one who does not fail in speech can oversee their entire personality and, by implication, that of the people in the immediate vicinity.

In the following verses, the author sets aside some room in his writing to indicate three analogies aiming at showing both the malefic influence and the tremendous effect of the tongue as a world of unrighteousness (3:6): the bits into the horses’ mouths (3:3), the very small rudder of the ships (3:4) and the small fire which sets ablaze a great forest (3:5).

James’ analogy, as otherwise all the three analogies were pretty popular in the author’s time,⁸⁴⁶ seems at a first sight to point out the relation of causality between putting the bit in the horses’ mouths and holding the reins of all of their body: “Indeed, we put bits into the horses’ mouths so that they may obey us, and we guide their whole body” (WEB). But if we take into account only this causal relationship then it loses some of its analogical function because the tongue as speech does not

⁸⁴⁶ Moo, *The Letter*, 152, 154; McKnight, *The letter*, 277.

determine the body or conduct to the same extent in which the bit in the horses' mouths, by its effect, guides all the animals.

Moo makes a distinction here between the fact that the tongue can 'control' the body, meaning that it determines it directly, and the fact that the former can "direct" the destiny of the body, namely it can indirectly "lead to" happiness or it can indirectly steer the person guilty of a destructive speech before the divine judgment which is "without mercy to one who has shown no mercy." In this case, we should take into consideration that James uses the word σῶμα to refer to the individual, and taking account of the context where he is regarded as a being with an eschatological route then the word σῶμα would refer to the whole life of the individual with present and eschatological experiences. Subsequently, Moo's explanation makes the relationship between "does not stumble" (οὐ πταίει) and "bridle" (χαλιναγωγῆσαι) a *matter of course*:

Probably, then, it is not so much 'control' that James intends to illustrate but 'direction' as the bit determines the direction of the horse, so the tongue can determine the destiny of the individual. Believers who exercise careful control of the tongue are able also to direct their whole life in its proper, divinely charted course: they are 'perfect' (v.2). But when that tongue is not retrained, small though it is, the rest of the body is likely to be uncontrolled and undisciplined also.⁸⁴⁷

Verse 3:4 also evokes the same truth: a small member may produce unimaginably great catastrophes: big ships, James says, are guided by a very small rudder (ἐλαχίστου πηδαλίου). The pilot is able to control the direction of the huge watercraft using skilfully a guiding instrument which, despite its being so small, is very effective. The sailor controls the ship because he controls the rudder. Here we have the element that makes the reader understand the huge effect produced by the rudder upon the ship he guides. In fact, the verb in the passive voice

⁸⁴⁷ Moo, *The Letter*, 153.

μετάγεται, which refers to the fact that ships are directed, denotes the effectiveness of the sailor's rudder. By analogy to the rudder – ship relationship, one can thus understand the power of the tongue to “direct” man's destiny.

The third analogy is that of the tiny flame (ήλίκον πῦρ) which sets ablaze great forests. James again draws attention to the measure-impact ratio, the ratio between the littleness of the flame and the ampleness of its destructive effect. Likewise, the tongue, a minute organ (μικρὸν μέλος), can engender enormous traumas. The negative nature of the tongue is emphasized by the author by means of a noun and two verbs: a world of unrighteousness (ὁ κόσμος τῆς ἀδικίας) corrupts the whole person (ή σπλοῦσα ὅλον) and sets the whole course of its life on fire (φλογίζουσα). The verb in the middle voice καθίσταται is employed to show that the tongue makes itself room among our members in order to exercise an evil role.⁸⁴⁸ This image of the tongue which, by what it does, confers on itself a negative role leads us to the description of the mechanism of temptation from 1:14-15, according to which evil lust first of all generates sin, so that in the end it brings, tragically, the death of that person. It is not only that the tongue has an evil nature, which accounts for its destructive effect, but the author wants to point out as well the divine sanction addressed to the tongue which hurts and victimizes. Bauckham brings two arguments in favour of this idea. First of all, Gehenna, to which the author makes reference, was considered during the author's time “the place of divine punishments of sinners” and in no case the home of force of Satan.⁸⁴⁹ And, secondly, Gehenna is unanimously and invariably represented as the “fire of divine judgment.” In conclusion, he says “Because the tongue sets fire to the cycle of

⁸⁴⁸ Blomberg and Kamell, *Exegetical Commentary*, 158.

⁸⁴⁹ Bauckham, *James*, 213.

existence here and now, its punishment hereafter will be to burn in the fire of Gehenna.”⁸⁵⁰

In verses 7 and 8, James displays the basic deficiency of the tongue and he does this by comparing it against animals. The particle τε in 3:7 divides the species of animals (φύσις) in beasts and birds, and reptiles and aquatic beings. James’ attention is not directed only to this division but especially to the fact that some animals from all these major families of animals (πάντα . . . φύσις) have been successfully tamed by humankind. Blomberg and Kamell consider that this enumeration of species makes allusion to Gen. 1:26 and 9:2 where God requires the first people to “subdue” them all.⁸⁵¹ The contrast between man’s capacity to fulfil his initial role of subduing the created world and his incapacity to meet God’s expectation to “bridle” the tongue, is as obvious as it is paradoxical and painful. The tongue, however, to which James alludes, is of course *the same* in 3:5-6 where the author does not talk about the tongue in general, but mostly about it as “a world of unrighteousness.” This tongue cannot be tamed by humankind. This “world of wickedness” is evil and is “full of deadly poison.” The adjective ἀκατάστατος (restless),⁸⁵² used by the author to unveil the negative character of the tongue “full of wickedness,” is *also* used once in LXX (Is. 54:11), and only twice in the New Testament (both of them occurring in the Epistle of James (1:8 and 3:8). Moo notes that “The word ‘restless’ translates the same word that James used in 1:8 to describe the ‘double-minded man, *unstable* in all he does.’” And Davids indicates that: “the tongue shows its demonic nature in its instability and

⁸⁵⁰ Bauckham, *James*, 213-214.

⁸⁵¹ Blomberg and Kamell, *Exegetical Commentary*, 159.

⁸⁵² ESV.

lack of single-mindedness and peace. It is not, as James will explain in 3:9-10, that the tongue never speaks good, but that it speaks evil as well.”⁸⁵³

In 3:9-10 the author highlights the crass duplicity of which the tongue makes proof. We bless God with it, James says, and we curse people using the same limb. This is a reiteration, Moo shows, of the verses in 2:1-13, where James accuses of duplicity the one who claims to have faith in Jesus Christ but also discriminates against those who are Christ’s people:

They claim to have faith in God while failing to exhibit the works that true faith always produces (2:14-26).

. . . .

But a logical connection seems clear: the inconsistency of the tongue is a very clear indication of the ‘restless evil’ that it is.⁸⁵⁴

The duplicity of the tongue is the more serious as it curses those who are created in God’s image (ὁμοίωσιν θεοῦ), which makes reference to Genesis 1:26-28 where the way in which God created and blessed man is narrated.

James’ observation focuses, in 3:10, on the fact that the same mouth behaves guilefully, cursing and blessing at the same time. The same term “mouth” (στόμαχος), which can be seen in Ps 9:28 (Ps. 10:7 in LXX) and Ps 58:13 (Ps. 59:12 LXX), puts in the foreground the negativity of the mouth which utters the curse. And Sir. 5:14 speaks of the severe condemnation of the one who has a duplicitous tongue (διγλώσσου). It is possible that texts such as these might be the foundation on the basis of

⁸⁵³ Davids, *The Epistle*, 145.

⁸⁵⁴ Moo, *The Letter*, 162- 163.

which the author accuses some duplicity of speech. James says plainly: “Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right!” (NLT)⁸⁵⁵

In 3:11 and the ensuing verses, James shows that not even nature does have any correspondent for the duplicity of the tongue. Therefore, the duplicity of the tongue is an abnormal and unacceptable thing. This is seen by James in 3:11 as a serious negative inclination whose adoption or toleration must be completely forbidden: “Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water?” (ESV)

In verse 3:12 James continues in a fraternal way (ἀδελφοί μου), but in another order of ideas, he attacks the same problem, appealing to a series of examples which are meant to show the imperturbable concordance between source and product. Unlike 3:11, where James poses a rhetorical question in order to show the abnormal character of duplicity, in 3:12 the author brings to light the fact that the nature of the heart (a parallel of 3:14) does not engender acts which have a different nature from that of the heart: “Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.” (ESV) The idea that a tree produces fruits according to its nature is not new.⁸⁵⁶ In fact this idea was used *too* by Jesus in Matthew 7:17, 18 to argue that evil prophets can be known by their evil deeds.

The fact that the author brings as argument the relation between source and result right after he submits the duplicity of the tongue to critique, can make us believe that the argument based on the examples in

⁸⁵⁵ Considering verses 10 and 11 together we can sketch the argument as follows: Any fountain overflows either sweet or bitter water. If a fountain once overflowed sweet water, and at other times bitter water, then this phenomenon would be something improper (James uses here the verb together with its negation οὐ χρή and can be translated by “it is not proper” or “it does not correspond”), it would be an anomaly. Therefore, a mouth which “bursts forth,” James appears to indicate, both the blessing and the curse is an aberration.

⁸⁵⁶ Bauckham has pointed out that a plant of a certain type cannot produce a different sort of fruit; this was a popular metaphor used in the Greek-Roman world (Bauckham, *James*, 90).

3:12 has the role of demonstrating that a spiritually mature person cannot produce a duplicitous speech because, as Kamell indicates, “People turn deceitful when they speak with forked tongues. Like Jesus, James insists that what comes from people’s mouth illustrates their hearts, so that this kind of double-speak reveals the vacillating allegiance condemned in 1:5-8.”⁸⁵⁷

The series of metaphors (and their implication) in 3:11 and 3:12, Bauckham thinks,

shift from the initial claim that one person cannot utter both good and bad statements (blessing God and cursing people) to the claim that a person of one kind cannot utter statements of another kind and finally to the claim that a bad person cannot utter good statements. This is an intelligible and logical progression of thought.⁸⁵⁸

The synergic relationship illustrated through the metaphors of the fig tree, the salt water, according to which the internal quality of a thing or person will necessarily and imperturbably spread on the outside, is to be found expressed under another form in 3:13, where the author asks his readers to show their wisdom by their conduct and concrete deeds. This proves on the one hand that there is a logical connection between 3:12 and 3:13 and, on the other hand, that James intends to continue his idea by tackling some details related to destructive communication (James uses the term “selfish ambition” twice), details which complete the picture of the tongue in 3:5-10. Bauckham expresses the continuity between 3:12 and 3:13 as follows:

A person whose real nature is shown by their cursing to be evil cannot utter genuinely good statements. This conclusion then provides a close link with the following

⁸⁵⁷ Blomberg and Kamell, *Exegetical Commentary*, 161.

⁸⁵⁸ Bauckham, *James*, 90.

verses, which focus on the outward expression of what is in the heart (3:13–17).⁸⁵⁹

In verse 3:13 the author invites his addressees to submit their wisdom and understanding to their own evaluation: “Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.” This verification is not however introspective, but is deduced on the basis of the synergic relationship between wisdom and works.

Regarding self-evaluation, demanded by the author in 3:13, we have to say that the simple sentence “let him show” (δείξάτω) uses the verb δείκνυμι employed by the author in 2:18 too (δείξόν – do show you; δείξω – I will show) where the imaginary interlocutor asks the believer, who is convinced that he can have faith in God without performing good works, to vindicate, if he can, his faith in God. Thus, the verification of the wisdom that the author demands here is identical with the verification of faith in 2:18. Therefore, as faith can be displayed or discovered by means of works, likewise wisdom can be inferred according to the works done with the meekness which is characteristic to them. As Moo holds in accordance with Hoppe,

Indeed, the test of true wisdom that James applies here picks up key ideas he touches on earlier in the letter: the importance of humility (1:21) and good works (2:14-26). ‘Good conduct,’ James insists, is the basis on which one can demonstrate wisdom.⁸⁶⁰

Since there is a synergic relationship between source and product, proved by the natural relationship between species and fruits, the author is justified to ask believers to know themselves “by their fruits.”⁸⁶¹ If their

⁸⁵⁹ Bauckham, *James*, 90.

⁸⁶⁰ Moo, *The Letter*, 169.

⁸⁶¹ Matthew 7:20.

behavior is good, and their works evince the kindness peculiar to wisdom, then they are undoubtedly wise.

In 3:14 James draws attention to the fact that the real features of the heart cannot be masked by the laudatory statements on the lips. In accord with the synergism recalled by the author in 2:22, and employed in the previous metaphors, the “bitter jealousy and rivalry” (ISV) that a person has in their heart will distinguish themselves freely in the antisocial relationships that the former will usually manifest. To “cover up the truth with boasting and lying” (NLT) means that the reality of the heart cannot be concealed with bald-faced lies. The anti-social character that the author accuses here is given by the terms ζῆλον πικρὸν (bitter envy). As Ropes explicates, the word ζῆλον, taken in the context of this verse, expresses the idea “of a fierce desire to promote one’s own opinion to the exclusion of those of others.”⁸⁶² The other word with which this term is associated is ἐπιθείαν and it expresses the idea of human propensity to use destructive means in order to promote one’s own interests and opinions.⁸⁶³ Both envy and selfishness are feelings which have an exclusivist function, and remind us of the sin of excluding the poor from the Biblical right to be equally accepted by their neighbours in the community.

The practice of concealing the truth in an arrogant and lying manner demonstrates a type of wisdom which is not from above, James points out in 3:15. The author infers the existence of ungodly wisdom from the concrete actions of arrogant praise. This wisdom “is earthly, unspiritual, demonic” (ESV). Firstly, as it results from the explanation of the term “earthly” (ἐπίγειος), the wisdom observed by the author is

⁸⁶² Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 245.

⁸⁶³ cf. Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 246.

“derived from the frail and finite world of human life and affairs.”⁸⁶⁴ Secondly, it is, as ABPE translates, “from the thoughts of the self.” And thirdly, it is demonical, namely according to Martin, “The behaviour of those in question is thought to be instigated by the demons themselves.”⁸⁶⁵ This, Blomberg and Kamell show, “recalls the diagnosis in 3:6 of the tongue being ‘set on fire by hell’ and anticipates the warning in 4:7 to resist the devil.”⁸⁶⁶

In 3:16 James reconfirms the synergism between envy (ζῆλος) and evil works (φαῦλον πρᾶγμα) saying that: “For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work.” (KJB) It is obvious that envy and strife work together with confusion and bad deeds.

Yet verse 17 returns to the topic from verse 15 particularizing the nature of the wisdom from above. James makes sure that all qualities are correctly enumerated. In this respect, the author uses the adverbs of time πρῶτον (first) and ἔπειτα (then). The feature that James sets in the first place is purity. After this, the other features are: peacefulness, gentleness, yielding. The latter characteristics of wisdom look like an echo of the first chapters where the author deals with the qualitative fruit-bearing of heart or mind, with the promotion of impartiality (chapter 2) and sincerity (chapter 3). Thus James continues in verse 17 by showing that the first features of wisdom are full of mercy and good fruits (μεσὴ ἐλέους καὶ καρπῶν ἀγαθῶν), impartiality (ἀδιάκριτος) and sincerity (ἀνυπόκριτος). James discusses mercy in 2:13, impartiality in 2:4 (οὐ διεκρίθητε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς) and the idea of sincerity is tackled in 3:14 where he asks his addressees not to lie against the truth.

⁸⁶⁴ Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 147.

⁸⁶⁵ Martin, *James*, 132.

⁸⁶⁶ Blomberg and Kamell, *Exegetical Commentary*, 174.

The addressive stage

The addressive function of the text makes the assertions, interrogations and imperatives of the canonical text be viewed from the perspective of the fact that they are bearers of God's voice and, implicitly, revealing of his will. The main order of the text concerns the duplicity of the tongue. The indicative of "not ought" (οὐ χρή), in 3:10, carries with itself God's will which expresses itself by the total rejection of the double, contradictory and negative language. Before this obvious rejection, the text has a series of imperatives and interrogations. Firstly, the command regarding the multitude of teachers in 3:1 stresses the importance of teachers' moral integrity. The community of interpreters, attentive to the addressive function of this imperative, will uphold and promote the moral integrity of the teachers in the assembly. Then, the destructive and ample effects of the negative, duplicitous speech in 3:5 weigh more in the balance of reader's attention, heedful to the addressivity of the text, because God emphasizes the awfulness of the destructive effect of the tongue in the service of wickedness. The interrogation in 3:11, which evokes the abnormality of the spring with two kinds of waters, conveys the divine disagreement with respect to the man who has two contradictory types of speech. The differentiation of the two kinds of speech in 3:15-17, and James' preference for the wisdom from above communicate God's will for us to choose this wisdom.

The integrative stage

The *final cause* of interpretation is rendered by the survival from the final judgment and the avoiding of its terrifying sanctions called in 3:6, Gehenna. Under the integrative aspect, the text becomes a means of

clarification of the fact that a duplicitous speech leads to an unhappy destination. Therefore, the text has instructive connotations. It helps the reader to know the things that he must prevent. Consequently, the immediate *effect* upon the reader could lie in the fact that the reader will recognize the abnormality of dual speech, will ponder upon the manner and contents of his speech, will find himself in the text and will adopt – maybe by prayer (cf. 1:5) –the wisdom coming from above.

7. Section four. Self-assessment and correction (4:1-10)

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

The paragraph in 4:1-10 is found in real connection with the previous major paragraphs making, seemingly, a reiteration of both the

negative internal feelings and the undesirable concrete actions. The “lust” in 4:1-3 (τῶν ἡδονῶν and ἐπιθυμεῖτε) appears to be an *echo* of 1:14-15 (ἐπιθυμίας). The term “killing,” to which James refers in 4:2 (φονεύετε), is used in 2:11 *as well* (φονεύεις). The term “members,” where lusts fight (ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ὑμῶν), in 4:1, can be *identically* found in 3:6 (ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἡμῶν). The friendship with the world (ἡ φιλία τοῦ κόσμου) in 4:4 is set *in contrast* with the friendship with God, term found in the discussion about Abraham in 2:23 (φίλος θεοῦ). The term “double-minded man” (καρδίας δίψυχοι) in 4:8 is found in the idea of duplicitous speech as it results from 3:9-10 and it is *similar* to the concept of double-minded man in 1:8 (ἄνθρωπος δίψυχος).

After the author shows in 3:18 that the fruits of righteousness is peace-making because this fruit is sown in peace, he brings up in 4:1-10 the source and complex transmission of fights and quarrels, showing that they “come from desires” (NIV). The purpose for which the author reveals the source and mechanism of conflicting actions is the repentance of the double-minded man, the target of the letter.

This paragraph can be divided in three sections that result one from another: v 1, vv 2-3, vv 4-10. The first section deals with the question related to the origin of quarrels and conflicts among people, the second one takes into account the mechanism of fights, includes both the internal causes and their concrete spreading in the objective space of relationships, and the third section refers to the author’s call to self-reflection and correction.

In 4:1, James meets his readers again with a question. The adverb οὐκ ([is it] not) implies the fact that the author awaits a positive answer to the question regarding the origin of fights.⁸⁶⁷ He wants to point out that conflicts and quarrels arise from the inner chamber of pleasures which

⁸⁶⁷ cf. Thayer, *A Greek English*, 462-463.

contribute to fights within the community. Ropes believes that fights do not take place between the lusts of the same person, but

The war is between pleasures which have their seat in the bodies of several persons, not between conflicting pleasures throwing an individual into a state of internal strife and confusion. Since the pleasures clash, the persons who take them as their supreme aim are necessarily brought into conflict.⁸⁶⁸

In 4:2, the author describes succinctly the system of conflicts among brothers, putting in the foreground both what happens in the heart of individuals and what predominates in the open objective field of works.

One of the major problems of this verse lies in understanding the relationship between the series of verbs. Moo sketches two different points of view. The first one has a three-clause structure (“you want,” “you kill,” “You quarrel”) and is based on the “positive-negative” type of sequence of verbs, and the second viewpoint has a two-clause structure (you want,” “you covet”) and is founded on the idea to which the author has already accustomed us, namely that the internal condition of the individual reproduces itself in the external and concrete sphere of works. While the first point of view has the disadvantage that it presupposes quite an unnatural way of reading the text, the second one, Moo demonstrates, matches the context better “since James has been at pains to show that disorder and evil in the community stem from ‘bitter envy and selfish ambition’ (3:14-16).”⁸⁶⁹ According to Moo and Johnson, the Hellenistic tradition regards “envy” and “jealousy” as working hand in hand with the acts of killing, enmity and wars, the latter ones deriving from the former ones unstoppably.⁸⁷⁰

⁸⁶⁸ Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 253.

⁸⁶⁹ Moo, *The Letter of James*, 182.

⁸⁷⁰ Moo, *The Letter*, 183; Johnson, *Brother of Jesus*, 49-50.

Evil lust (ἐπι-θυμέω) and envy (ζηλόω) go together, implacably, with murder (φονεύω), fight (μάχομαι) and war (στρατεύομαι and μάχομαι).⁸⁷¹ Killing, fighting and enmity are the external correspondent of illegitimate desire and unquenched envy. Given the fact that there is lust and envy, undesirable and antisocial works such as killing and conflict are irrepressible and they are altogether sterile when it comes to bringing any ecclesial advantages. The conjugated forces of these internal and external states are not left with anything (οὐκ ἔχετε) and do not obtain anything (οὐ δύνασθε ἐπιτυχεῖν).

This correspondence between the internal vices and reprehensible external works is underscored by Blomberg and Kamell in the translation and diagram of this verse as follows:⁸⁷²

Table 6. Kamell's diagramation of 4:2

2a	Assertion	You desire and you do not have
B	Result (of 2a)	[so] you murder;
C	Restmnt. (of 2a)	and you envy and are not able to obtain,
D	Result (of 2c)	[so] you fight and war.

Another reason why individuals who are tributary to lusts and envy do not receive anything, the author says in 4:2, 3, is that they do not ask for anything, or they ask thinking to waste in pleasures. The adverb κακῶς (wrongly)⁸⁷³ and the clause which comes after, Ropes claims, refer

⁸⁷¹ For Ropes, the outcome of bad desire, "if unrestrained, is to cause the murder of the man who stands in its way." (Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 255).

⁸⁷² Blomberg and Kamell, *Exegetical Commentary*, 184.

⁸⁷³ James 4:3.

to the selfish purpose to carry out one's own pleasures, and this contrasts powerfully with meeting God's expectations.⁸⁷⁴

In 4:4 James addresses the recipients in a completely surprising manner using the noun 'adulteresses' (μοιχαλίδες) at feminine plural.⁸⁷⁵ This noun is used several times (six times according to Rahlfs' Septuagint)⁸⁷⁶ in LXX. From these occurrences the texts in Ezek. 23:45 and Ho. 3:1 use the noun as a metaphor to indicate the degree of moral degradation and lowliness characterized by the vacillation without remorse between God and world. Moo spots several texts in the Old Testament which *resemble* the idea of duplicity in James:

It is the Old Testament that provides the explanation for the address. As stressed especially in the prophets, God has joined himself with the people of Israel by graciously electing them and bringing them into covenant relationship with himself. This relationship is frequently portrayed with marital imagery (Is. 54:1-6; Jer. 2:2). Thus, when that relationship is jeopardized by Israel's dalliance with other gods, the situation can be labelled 'adultery': 'As a faithless wife leaves her husband, so have you been faithless to me, O house of Israel, says the Lord' (Jer. 3:20). It is in Hosea that this theme finds its most poignant expression. The prophet's marriage to an unfaithful harlot is used to mirror the unfaithfulness of Israel to the Lord. Israel 'has played the harlot' (2:5), deserting her 'first husband', the Lord, in order to pursue other 'lovers', Baal and other false gods (2:7). Yet the Lord promises to show mercy to his people; they will again call him 'my husband' (2:16), for the Lord promises, 'I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord' (2:20).⁸⁷⁷

⁸⁷⁴ cf. Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 259.

⁸⁷⁵ Thayer, *A Greek-English*, 416-417; Moulton, *The Analytical*, 272.

⁸⁷⁶ Rahlfs, ed., *Rahlfs' Septuagint*, exported from BibleWorks 8 Electronic Edition, July 7, 2015.

⁸⁷⁷ Moo, James, 148.

The duplicity of the addressees is explicitly targeted by the author in 4:8 where he calls them “double-minded people.” The double game of his readers *reminds* us both of the man in 1:8 (“unstable in all his ways”), and of Jesus’ statement that no man can serve two masters. In conformity with Jesus’ teaching, the author asserts as clearly as possible that “whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”⁸⁷⁸

This duplicity is highlighted by James mostly due to the fact that the relation of friendship with the world (φιλία τοῦ κόσμου) excludes friendship with God. Why does the author take such an uncompromising and exclusivist position? Again, if we considered the world as a sum of “forces and things that are at least indifferent to God, if not openly hostile to him,” then his exclusivist position would be a *matter of course*.⁸⁷⁹ World and God are contrary to each other and irreconcilable. This principle determines James to state that “whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (ESV). And it is still this principle which makes James ask his addressees in 1:17 to keep themselves “unstained from the world.” The believers’ walking on two paths seems to be the target for the writing of this epistle.

But what can the relationship between the adulterine infidelity of those who befriend the world (while they still claim friendship with God) and the verses referring to the mechanism of fights among brothers be? The noun φίλος was *also* used in 2:23 with respect to Abraham’s active faith, faith which was obviously highlighted by the profound fact of obeying God. If Abraham’s friendship with God implies obeying Him, then killing, fights and wars among the brothers in faith (those who pretend they obey God), things which are contrary to the divine Law (2:11),

⁸⁷⁸ James 4:4.

⁸⁷⁹ Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 260.

evinced, by the very fact of breaking the Law, an adulterine behaviour in front of God and, therefore, a rebellious one.

Verse 4:5 uses three terms characterized by a high dose of *vagueness*. The first term is ἡ γραφή (the Scripture) and is *vague* taking into account the fact that we cannot establish at first sight to which writing he refers. The second word is φθόνον (envy). The *vagueness* of this term consists in the lack of necessary data in order to eliminate the dilemma concerning the nature of envy and its subject matter. The third term is τὸ πνεῦμα (spirit) and is *vague* regarding its direct referent. One has to note that the vagueness of terms leads to the unusual vagueness of the verse. Due to this, Moo considers that “Jas. 4:5 is one of the most difficult verses in the NT.”⁸⁸⁰

The term πνεῦμα can be grasped in two ways:

1. τὸ πνεῦμα is the subject which performs the action, ἐν ἡμῖν (in us) is its object, and ἐπιτοθεῖ (yearns) is the action of the subject. In this case, the verse would be translated with the help of the ISV translation: “the Spirit that God caused to live in us jealously yearns for us.” Concerning this translation, the problem that arises further refers to the identity of the spirit. Who is τὸ πνεῦμα? Is it God’s Spirit or man’s spirit put in man since the very creation? Some commentators bring up the term φθόνον, which is translated by greed or envy, a human bent towards ungodliness, always characterized by negative connotations.⁸⁸¹ Their argument is that since φθόνος always has negative connotations in antique Greek literature, it never labels God, it is impossible for the spirit which envies to be God’s Spirit but is rather man’s spirit corrupted in lusts. Beside this, they say, this interpretation matches the remote

⁸⁸⁰ Moo, *The Letter*, 188.

⁸⁸¹ Adamson, *The Epistle*, 172, Johnson, *Brother of Jesus*, 33, 200; Michl and Mitton apud Davids, *The Epistle*, 163.

context of 3:13-4:13. Even if the idea of the Divine Spirit who indwells man is endorsed by texts in the New Testament like Rom. 8:11 and 1 Cor. 3:16, nevertheless, given the fact that James no longer refers to the Holy Spirit elsewhere in his epistle, he makes uncertain the understanding that τὸ πνεῦμα would refer to the Holy Spirit.⁸⁸² Nonetheless, McCartney, evoking a propositional *similarity* between the work *Virtues* of Philo and the text in Jas. 4:5, considering that it would not be wrong to believe that the author of the epistle refers here to the Holy Spirit who was given to people.⁸⁸³

2. τὸ πνεῦμα is the object of the verb ἐπιποθέω (long), and θεός can be considered, even if it is not found but in the context, to be the subject which does the action. In this case, we would have a translation identical with ESV “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us.” Thus, τὸ πνεῦμα is the human spirit but it is not him which envies God. Surely, this interpretation has to overcome two obstacles. First of all, it must offer a better interpretation than the one on which the first translation is founded, and secondly, clarify how God, known in the epistle as loving and generous, is jealous. Davids contravenes the first interpretation pointing out that this interpretation, though attractive, ignores 4:4 by overleaping its structure, to which 4:5 is symmetrical, and from where it can result logically, and thus get too far at 4:1-3. Moo sorts out the problem of the meaning of φθόνος saying that: “Since *phthonos* and *zelos* are sometimes interchangeable (cf. 1 Macc. 8:16; *T. Simeon* 4:5 and *T. Gad* 7:2) and the latter was frequently used of the ‘jealousy’ of God, it is not impossible to ascribe *phthonos* to God.”⁸⁸⁴ On the other hand, Moo, as well as Davids, believes that the proximate context is the

⁸⁸² cf. Moo, *The Letter*, 190; cf. Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 264.

⁸⁸³ McCartney, *James*, 214.

⁸⁸⁴ Moo, *The Letter*, 190.

key which opens the door to an adequate interpretation.⁸⁸⁵ According to this understanding, 4:5 derives from 4:4 and accounts for it. Namely, as God wants His spirit placed in man with jealousy for Himself, it is clear why exactly the author reminds his recipients that friendship with the world is enmity with God. Any flirtation with the world and its values involves an adulterine duplicity and certain rebellion against God. The reality of God's jealousy of his people is also backed up by texts, Blomberg and Kamell shows, like Deut. 4:24, Jos. 24:19, Is. 26:11 and Ezek. 16:42.⁸⁸⁶ And the idea of substituting the spirit in man, according to Ropes, is found in texts such as Gen. 2:7, Is. 42:5, Eccles. 12:7, Num. 16:22, 27:16, Zech. 12:1, Heb. 12:9.⁸⁸⁷

James' usage of the articulate noun ἡ γραφή makes us suppose that it refers to the writings of the Old Testament. This noun is *equalled* by "a poetical rendering of the idea of Ex. 20:5."⁸⁸⁸ It can also be "a midrashic-type construction . . . or a rhythmic quotation."⁸⁸⁹ Even if James usually quotes from LXX the noun could refer to an unknown version of the Old Testament or, lastly, to some apocryphal works.⁸⁹⁰

In 4:6, James comes back to those with a humble social condition in 1:9 showing that God gives them grace. The author expresses this idea by putting in contrast God's compassionate and generous action towards humble people against the revenge of the proud ones. In fact, James establishes this consideration on one of the Old Testament quotations, which is: "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." A *similar* sentence with this one is that in Prov. 3:34: "Toward the scorers

⁸⁸⁵ Moo, *The Letter*, 190; Davids, *The Epistle*, 164.

⁸⁸⁶ Blomberg and Kamell, *Exegetical Commentary*, 191.

⁸⁸⁷ Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 264.

⁸⁸⁸ Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 262.

⁸⁸⁹ Martin, *James*, 149.

⁸⁹⁰ Davids, *The Epistle*, 162.

he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor.”⁸⁹¹ The propositional sequence in Greek of Prov. 3:34 (ὕπερηφάνοις ἀντιτάσσεται ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν) is *identical* with the sequence of the sentence in Jas 4:6 (ὕπερηφάνοις ἀντιτάσσεται, ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν). This *identity* can make us consider with certainty that James’ quotation is actually from Prov. 3:34.

The conjunction οὖν in 4:7 binds this verse with the previous one indicating a causal logical connection: God gives grace to the humble, so (οὖν) obey God!⁸⁹² In order to make it clear that obedience to God is an exclusivist action, not permitting the duplicity of a flirtation with the world, James continues by emphasizing the imperious opposition towards devil. Friendship with God excludes friendship with the devil. The believer’s attitude towards God has to be associated with a contrary but symmetrical attitude towards the devil. Both of these attitudes are followed by proper consequences. If drawing near to God has as consequence God’s drawing near to the believer, then, vice-versa, opposing the devil is followed by the devil’s flight from the believer (4:7, 8).

The author of the epistle explains that adultery, of which his consignees are guilty, lies both in duplicity of thought, a phenomenon underscored by James in 1:6, 8, and in duplicity of verbal actions (3:9,10) and conduct (4:1-4). This reality determines James to ask his addressees to cleanse both their souls and their hands, minds and works at the same time.

Coming back to 4:8, we have to show that the author of the epistle demands that his recipients should cleanse their whole being, which comprises both action and thought. James pursues the cleansing of the

⁸⁹¹ ESV.

⁸⁹² Thayer, *A Greek-English*, 463.

heart and hands because, on the one hand, the internal and impure contents of thinking flows freely in the domain of works, and on the other hand, works are unrighteous and destructive and their realm is the proper background for verifying of nature and degree of the heart's cleansing.⁸⁹³ The cleansing (καθαρίζω) to which James refers implies both the change of the external behavior from a violent, selfish and especially guileful one into one which is peaceful, people-loving and characterized by fidelity towards God, and the change of evil, selfish thinking into a thinking which is submitted to God, without adulterine oscillations.

The means of cleansing asked by the author is repentance (4:9). James calls his recipients to self-evaluate their state of a divided heart first of all, a state which drifts towards fulfilling their own wicked lusts and resorts greedily to verbal and physical actions that are destructive and selfish. The repentance required by James seems to have a gradual character: "Be wretched and mourn and weep." The imperious calling to repentance also presupposes eliminating the dispositions which would shamefully contrast with their inner and behavioural real state. A believer who laughs indifferently at his spiritual state, whereas his works denote duplicity and selfishness, may be placed in the same category as the believer who pretends he believes in God while the good works, required emphatically by the proximate circumstances, are completely absent from his life.⁸⁹⁴

In 4:10, the author closes this sequence of texts, returning to the theme of humility in 4:6 and that of exaltation in 1:9. The topic of humility and its relationship with that of exaltation is simply expressed by Ropes as

⁸⁹³ James 3:13.

⁸⁹⁴ James 2:14.

follows: "This act implies single-hearted faith, and such a soul has a sure reward from God, cf. 1:9."⁸⁹⁵

The addressive stage

James' imperious call to holistic "moral cleansing," thinking and action, is the present message addressed now by God to the reader. God transforms the text into a message with an address whose purpose is to heal divided hearts.

Due to the addressive function of the text, James' interrogations in 4:1, 4:4 and 4:5 become bearers of God's voice. The question: "What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?" (ESV) becomes God's instrument of intermediating the reader's self-reflexive action. The immediate rhetorical question "Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?" expects an affirmative answer on behalf of the reader. Given God's expression by means of 4:1-10, a careless, purely analytical approach to the interrogations would actually be an ignorance of God's presence. God employs the Biblical text and the moment of reading it in view of fulfilling the divine process of discipleship, therefore the reader enters into the realm of divine communication. A real reception of the text under its addressive aspect demands an undelayed answer from the reader, an answer which might take the form of prayer. The reader is expected to answer the question from 4:4 regarding the friendship with the world and the enmity with God.

At the same time, statements referring to lust and killing in 4:2, to God's paternal jealousy in 4:5 and the divine generosity in 4:6, by their

⁸⁹⁵ Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 272.

addressive function, determine the reader to assess the extent of his attachment to God.

The imperatives in 4:7 “submit to God” (Υποτάγητε) and “resist the devil” (ἀντίστητε) like those in 4:8, “draw near to God” (ἐγγίσατε), “clean your hearts” (καθαρίσατε) and “purify your hearts” (ἀγνίσατε) become expression of God’s will. By the addressive function of the text, God demands the removal of duplicity and integral self-reflexive cleansing through repentance. God asks the cleansing of hands as an exponent of exteriority, because the nature of works displays the character of the heart. God also asks the cleansing of the heart as an exponent of interiority, because the moral contents of the heart is outpoured without any hindrances in the public sphere of social relations.

James’ stringent requirement in 4:9 to acknowledge one’s own wickedness and adopt an attitude of humility, peculiar to the moral state of degradation, is consequently an authentic divine message. Lastly, the call to humility and the promise of exaltation require obedience and faith from the reader.

The integrative stage

The statements in the text, which require the reader’s total attachment and the interrogations which invite to self-assessment and integral cleansing, mind and actions, brighten the path of those who desire exaltation. Taking into consideration that the text sequence 4:1-10 closes with the eschatological promise of exaltation (ὕψώσει ὑμᾶς), and knowing from 1:12 and 2:5 that the uplifting supposes receiving the richness of faith and inheritance of the kingdom, then assuming the cleansing of heart and works has as effect the assuming of this eschatological glory too. Thus, the *final cause* which standardizes the

interpretation of this text is the promise of elevation. The text, in its entirety, has eschatological reverberations and a cathartic function.

The instantaneous effect of the text upon the reader denotes its transforming character: the reader will realize that fights among neighbours come from evil lusts. These fights evoke the presence of lusts in the interior forum of the human being (4:1). Also, he/she will understand that, if he/she wants to be a friend of God, he/she will have to give up “friendship with the world” (4:4), will humble him/herself (4:6), will draw near to God and will cleanse his/her heart making a difference among works and refusing to practise evil works with duplicity (4:7-8). He/she will also become involved, in a deeply rational and emotional way, in the necessary undertake of cleansing from duplicity (4:9).

8. Section five: the differentiation between manners of speech (James 4:11-17)

Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor? Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.

In this section, James makes reference to the denigrating speech and the sin of boasting. In verses 4:11-12 the author asks his addressees not to use defamatory rumors since the one who judges their neighbor like this implicitly judges the Law. There are two elements which make reference to one of the main sections. The first one is the manner of addressing. The author addresses them by using “brothers” (ἀδελφοί), which puts this section in contrast with the previous one, including it among those sections where the author is instructive rather than accusative. The second element consists in the usage of two terms καταλαλέω (to speak against)⁸⁹⁶ and καυχάομαι (to boast)⁸⁹⁷ which allude to speech, and chiefly to the speech which does not bless but summons either malice, like in the case of the defamatory speech, or arrogance, as in the case of boasting. The mode of addressing and the topic of speech make this section border on the third section where the author, explicitly, deals with the wrong uses of speech. An aspect which is related more to the likeness between section five and three is the summoning of God’s judgment. God, James insists on emphasizing, is the one who “*is able to save and destroy.*” The reference to this judgment is made by the author in 3:1 and 3:6 too, when he refers to wrong employment of speech.

James examines the defamatory speech departing from the analysis of the judgment act (κρίνω), and then he looks at the person who judges through the perspective of this action. The verb κρίνω has 269 occurrences in LXX but cannot be found in any of them referring to judgment of the Law.⁸⁹⁸ The idea of judging the law is a *vague* statement, at least at first sight. The connection made by James between the defamatory speaking of neighbours (καταλαλέω), judging of neighbours

⁸⁹⁶ Moulton, *The Analytical*, 217.

⁸⁹⁷ Moulton, *The Analytical*, 226.

⁸⁹⁸ Rahlfs, ed., *Rahlfs’ Septuagint*, exported from BibleWorks 8 Electronic Edition, July 7, 2015.

(κρίνω) respectively, and the defamatory speaking of the Law (καταλαλέω), the judging of the Law (κρίνω) respectively, in order to emphasize the idea that whoever speaks ill of their neighbor actually judges the Law, can be explicated (a *matter of course*) if we take into account the fact that the ill speaking of neighbours, presupposes a breaking of the command to love, from the Law, which once broken implies the breaking of the whole Law (2:10). Or, as Moo says, “However high and orthodox our view of God’s law might be, a failure actually to do it says to the world that we do not *in fact* put much store by it.”⁸⁹⁹ The assault against the Law presupposed by speaking against the neighbor is emphasised especially when we take into consideration the breaking of the command to love mindfully. James underscores this in 4:17, saying that “If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.”

After James analyses the act of ill speaking, he arrives at looking at his subject, namely the doer, through the very viewpoint of his opposition to the Law: “if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.” (ESV, 2001) Again, it is easy to notice James’ epistemological perspective according to which the moral profile of a person is to be tested by the moral value of their deeds. Given the link between action and identity, the question in 4:12 is meant to make the reader assess his/her fidelity to the Law.

In verses 4:13-16, the author spotlights the sin of boastfulness regarding the making of plans without considering God’s will. The words οἱ λέγοντες (you who say) in 4:13 and λέγειν ὑμᾶς (you ought to say) in 4:15 indicate the correction of a wrong way of talking. The boast related to the planning of time (Σήμερον ἢ αὔριον), business (ἐμπορευσόμεθα) and even gain in business (κερδήσομεν), ignoring God’s will is blurred by

⁸⁹⁹ Moo, *The Letter*, 199.

James by bringing two things, which cannot be neglected, to readers' attention: first of all, man does not know what the future holds in store for himself (4:14a) and then, the continuity of man's biological life is uncertain (4:14b). The author's conclusion is that the arrogant speech (καυχᾶσθε) which shows self-confidence and not confidence in God is bad. And he/she who knows to do a good thing, in this case to speak with humility and trust in God being dependent on His will (saying "if it is the Lord's will"), and does not do it, then he/she commits a sin (4:17).

The addressive stage

James' interrogations related to the public, verbal act of judging the neighbour and those regarding the ephemerality of biological life become God's interrogations. In the intimate background of meditation, the Holy Spirit can orchestrate these interrogations so that man will feel morally obligated, by the divine-human dialogue, into which he/she enters, to answer humbly and objectively. The reader is invited to realize that the answer, when he/she speaks ill of neighbours, must include the acknowledgement that he/she is, subsequently, a judge of the Law, acquiescing to the state, not at all pleasant, of being in conflict with the genuine and right Judge of the Law and people.

In the same order of ideas, the *addressivity* of the text makes the author's orders become God's imperatives. The verb in the present imperative, "do not speak evil against one another," is thus a real and personal requirement addressed to the reader by God himself. Then, the author's command in 4:13, by which he asks for readers' attention, "Ἄγε vñv (come now), can easily transfer its peremptory character upon James' directive in 4:15 too, with respect to putting speech in concord with God's will. The dependence on God's will is a request of the Holy Spirit.

The integrative stage

The fact that the author makes reference to God again, the judge who “is able to save and to destroy” will help the reader understand that he who talks by abasing his neighbour, and boasts, by deceiving himself, is going to come before the one who has the power to destroy, but the person who avoids criminal and arrogant language and does not rival God by their works, will have hope in front of him who is able to save. The *final cause* of the reader’s life is, therefore, to survive the judgment of a God who can save.

From this perspective, the text is useful to the believer who wants his salvation. He finds out how he must and must not speak. Consequently, the reader will get rid of both the speech which discredits one’s neighbour, and the speech which over-credits one’s own ego. Grasping that the gossip and malicious critique extend their empire upon the harmony and peace in a church, the reader will avoid cowardly gossip and will quit self-praise, which replaces unjustly God’s glorification and his/her own humility.

9. Section six. Human relationship (5:1-6)

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your

hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.

In this section, James chiefly addresses the rich announcing their imminent condemnation. He goes on by explaining the reasons why the divine condemnation concerns them inevitably (5:1). The first reason lies in the selfish storage of riches (5:2-3). The second reason is the incorrect remuneration of workers (5:4). The third one consists in fulfilling one's own wicked desires in the context in which God's judgment knocks at the door (5:5). And fourthly, there is the killing of righteous people (5:6). The antisocial relations and discrimination based on ranks, where the rich are involved, allude to the first section of the epistle which tackles the irreversible biological degradation of the rich (1:10), but mostly to the second section, in which James blames the Christian believers for denigrating the poor and discriminating against them publicly.

The announcement of inevitable doom starts with the call to weep and howl (κλαύσατε ὀλολύζοντες), which differs from mourn and weep (πενθήσατε καὶ κλαύσατε) in 4:9, by the very fact that weeping and mourning are seen by James as an emotional reception of the doom which is to come, and not as a way that leads to humility and exaltation afterwards.

The selfish storage of riches is not for the use of the rich, as it is not for the use of the poor either, because the riches are rotten and their clothes have started to be eaten away by moths. This excessive gathering of things denotes the inhumanity of the rich. Calvin shows this as follows: "For God has not appointed gold for rust, nor garments for moths; but, on the contrary, he has designed them as aids and helps to human life.

Therefore, even spending without benefit is a witness of inhumanity.”⁹⁰⁰ The worthlessness of wealth is an indubitable reality if it is seen from the prophetic perspective.⁹⁰¹ The perfect tense used by James here is likely to have been used in a prophetic sense.⁹⁰² In this case, James would transpose himself to an eschatological plan from where he sees the future state of the rich as an event already consumed. Also, we can take into account the fact that James underlines the transitory and unreliable nature of the rich.⁹⁰³

In 5:3 James describes the momentary character of riches by the metaphor of rust (κατίωται).⁹⁰⁴ And their rust (ὁὶὸς αὐτῶν) will be a piece of evidence for the greed of the rich. This statement is *vague* by the fact that it does not clear up the way in which rust will speak to their detriment (μαρτύριον ὑμῖν ἔσται). Moo reduces the *vagueness* of this text pointing out that the latter would actually be translated by “their corrosion will be evidence *against* you” and rust is nothing but a metaphor for the lack of using the gathered riches for the benefit of neighbours. Not using the riches will be a proof of their greediness, the riches were stored with selfishness instead of being offered with generosity for the benefit of the needy people.⁹⁰⁵ James’ last sentence in 5:3 reinforces this interpretation: “You have laid up treasure in the last days.” (ESV) and the term for laid up is ἐθησαυρίσατε, and can be translated by hoard or treasure up.⁹⁰⁶ After *comparing* the phrase “in the last days” with other phrases in the New Testament, Raposa reached the

⁹⁰⁰ Calvin, *Commentaries*, 344.

⁹⁰¹ Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 284.

⁹⁰² Blomberg and Kamell, *James*, 221.

⁹⁰³ Moo, *The Letter*, 213.

⁹⁰⁴ Moo, *The Letter*, 213.

⁹⁰⁵ Moo, *The Letter*, 214.

⁹⁰⁶ Thayer, *A Greek-English*, 290-291.

conclusion that this phrase refers to: “the days of judgement, when punishment will be awarded.”⁹⁰⁷

In 5:4, James brings to our attention the deceiving of workers by not remunerating them justly. James underscores the seriousness of this mistake through two terms: cries out (κράζει) and cries (βοαί). The wages of the workers unfairly withdrawn cry out to the Lord of heaven. The wage cries because it finds itself in the pockets of the rich, in a place to which it does not belong, a strange one.⁹⁰⁸ And also, the cry of the workers paid incorrectly reaches the Lord of heaven’s ears. The reference to the pay (μισθός) detained from the workers *alludes* to the text in Lev. 19:13 where the remuneration is imposed (ὁ μισθὸς τοῦ μισθωτοῦ) on time to a hired servant: “The wages of a hired servant shall not remain with you all night until the morning.” Both the very act of defrauding and the persons deceived are in God’s focus.

In 5:5, James puts in parallel the living for personal pleasure and the satiation of the heart.⁹⁰⁹ The parallelism between the action of living for wantonness and satiation of the heart, seen as “the seat of pleasures, appetites, passions”⁹¹⁰ evokes a new synergic pair.

Out of 960 occurrences of the noun καρδιά (heart) there is no connection either with the verb ἐτρυφήσατε (you lived in indulgence) or with ἐσπαταλήσατε (lived in self-indulgence), which conjures an inedited parallelism again.⁹¹¹ Verbs τρυφάω (I live a luxurious life) and σπαταλάω (I live extravagantly, I overindulge) in this context have a negative connotation. The seriousness of the works to which these verbs make

⁹⁰⁷ Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 287.

⁹⁰⁸ Blomberg and Kamell, *James*, 223.

⁹⁰⁹ Blomberg and Kamell, *James*, 217.

⁹¹⁰ Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 290.

⁹¹¹ Rahlfs, ed., *Rahlfs’ Septuagint*, exported from BibleWorks 8 Electronic Edition, July 7, 2015.

reference is even more amplified by the ironical emphasis that living in indulgence and self-indulgence takes place in or for a time of slaughter.⁹¹² This time of slaughter, considered by some interpreters as being a time of judgment, is not propitious at all for living in pleasures, as

[t]he “last days” have already begun; the judgment *could* break in at any time – yet the rich, instead of acting to avoid that judgment, are, by their selfish indulgence, incurring greater guilt. They are like cattle being fattened for kill.⁹¹³

The apogee of James’ accusations regarding the destructive relations orchestrated by the rich consists in incriminating and killing the defenceless but righteous people. The rich are not reprobated by James for the fact that they are rich but because they do not use their resources for the benefit of their neighbours and, at the same time, because they employ their assets in order to destroy the life of the helpless and innocent ones. The verb καταδικάζω (condemn), used to indicate the fact that the rich subject the very righteous people to the labour of the public judgment, aims to highlight their shameful action. The *same* term is used by the LXX in Ps 93:21 (Ps. 94:21) in the context where the psalmist reveals that the wicked “frame injustice by statute”: “They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.” In Lam. 3:36 we are shown that God Himself does not approve of the action of subverting a man in his cause. Both the noun δίκαιον and the verb ἀντιτάσσεται are, as we can notice, in the singular, which shows that James would envisage a certain person who was blamed and murdered unfairly.⁹¹⁴ James ends section six by pointing out the anti-human character of the intra-community relationships of the rich.

⁹¹² Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 290.

⁹¹³ Moo, *The Letter*, 218.

⁹¹⁴ Moo, *The Letter*, 218.

The addressive stage

This section, under its addressive aspect, intercedes the divine speech for all those who can share the assets they possess and who do not do it. God's will reveals itself to the reader like in chapter two where it is about the futility of faith which does not perform good deeds, as in 4:17, where the truth that whoever can do something good and does not do it commits sin is emphasized. The universal truths recalled by the text, namely the fact that judgment is ineluctable, the transient nature of riches, the reality of the divine judgment, God's careful surveillance and his punishing of anti-human and criminal actions are God's means of drawing the reader's attention to the seriousness of the hurts done with egoism and violence.

The integrative stage

This section puts in the foreground the arrogant and aggressive behaviour of the rich against the poor. The exaggerated laying up of possessions, the unjust appropriation of the poor people's wages, living in pleasures selfishly and killing the righteous and the one who is deprived of defense and resources are damnable deeds. The punishment for such things is inevitable because the pain of the oppressed is known by the Lord of heaven (5:4). In all this context of warnings, we can implicitly notice the desire to avoid the penalties of the final judgment directed against anti-human actions. This intention represents the *final cause* for the reader of the sixth section.

The reader is informed about the things which draw the repercussions of judgment. Therefore, the text will aid the reader,

conscious of the day of judgment, to find out the things he/she must not do. Avoiding deliberately the things condemned by James gives the reader the hope of surviving from judgment. Subsequently, the reader will realize the transitory nature of riches and the blamable character of greediness and egoism, he/she will share what he/she has with the poor, will not hold back the wages of his employees, will not deceive others, will not accuse the righteous but will associate with them by helping and sharing his faith. From this viewpoint, the text has moral and clearly social connotations.

10. Section seven: On patience in trial, prayer, faith and salvation (5:7-20).

Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation. Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins,

he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

The method of approaching the recipients changes in this section. The spirit is a familiar one. In 5:11 James includes himself in discussion, using the verb in the first person plural (μακαρίζομεν)⁹¹⁵ seeing himself as part of the same religious community, beside the direct recipients. In this section the author does not call his addressees differently (you the rich ones or adulterous people like in 4:4 or in 5:1) but using the name “brothers” (5:7, 9, 19) or “my brothers” (5:10, 12). On the other hand, James does not accuse here anymore, but he looks after the believers, bringing solutions both for their spiritual and physical problems.

In the first part of section seven, James asks his readers, imperatively (Μακροθυμήσατε), to be long-suffering. And the limit of long-suffering must be the “Lord’s coming.” The author comes to the help of the readers with four impulses, which have the role of encouraging the believers’ readiness to suffer. First of all believers have to be patient, as the peasant is patient waiting for the sweet fruits of the earth until it receives the spring and autumn rain, because the Lord’s coming is not a far event, on the contrary, it is close by (ἡ παρουσία τοῦ κυρίου ἥγγικεν).⁹¹⁶

⁹¹⁵ Moulton, *The Analytical*, 256.

⁹¹⁶ James 5:8.

Since the believers' temptation to complain against each other was a current reality, James asked them not to carry forward this temptation, taking into consideration the truth that the Lord was, in his position of Judge, right at the door. The words *πρὸ τῶν θυρῶν ἔστηκεν* (before the doors is standing) conjure the imminence of God's coming. Another motivation concerning patience lies in the exemplary patience of the prophets of God. (5:10)

In verse 5:11 James changes the verb *μακροθυμέω* which demonstrates more than self-control for the verb *ὑπομονή* and connects it with the sense of perseverance.⁹¹⁷ By this change, he prepares Job's introduction as a model of suffering. The perspective from which James introduces Job is that of the results of his patience, orchestrated by God with mercy and compassion. The effect that suffering has on the believer who assumes it is one of the motivations with which the author asks believers insistently to suffer all kinds of trials. The sufferings occasioned by trial or the pains occurring after temptations are only a brief episode from a story that ends happily. Thus, like in 1:2-4, the momentary suffering has to be regarded from the viewpoint of the results to which suffering leads in the end. Perseverance in faith cannot be analysed but through its results. Nonetheless, an important thing to specify here is that the thrill of suffering belongs to a surprisingly beautiful story because the latter is completed by God and directed by him with mercy and compassion (5:11). James insists on indicating in this verse that the reward of Job's patience is a divine act and this act reflects the Lord's compassionate and merciful heart. This idea is rendered especially by the Aramaic Bible in Plain English as such: "You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the result which the Lord Jehovah made for him, because the Lord Jehovah is merciful and caring." In this verse, we

⁹¹⁷ Thayer, *A Greek-English*, 387.

can find a new synergic pair of the mind-action type. “The outcome of the Lord’s dealing” (NASB), which mirrors God’s mercy and compassion, are a series of different words that present God from the perspective of the acts He undertakes. Therefore, “James does seek to encourage our faithful, patient endurance of affliction by reminding us of the blessing that we receive for such faithfulness from pure merciful and compassionate God.”⁹¹⁸

In 5:12, James’ interdiction either to swear on heaven or on earth, or to use another vow, renders, almost integrally, the words of Jesus, as we find them in Matthew 5:34-37, with respect to the swearing. Even if there is no unanimity regarding the degree of *similitude* between these two interdictions (that of Jesus and James) or the reason why James prohibits all oaths,⁹¹⁹ it is though obvious that James asks readers expressly, using the verb εἰμί in the present imperative (ἦτω),⁹²⁰ to keep their word, not oscillating duplicitously from “yes” (ναὶ) to “no” (οὐ) and the other way round.

In each verse from 5:13 to 5:18 we can find the topic of prayer. James asks his readers, again exigently, to pray (προσευχέσθω) in case someone passes through hardships.⁹²¹ They had better pray rather than step back from perseverance and look for an escape by changing their “yes” into “no,” or vice-versa. But if anyone has a good heart, they should concentrate the positive enthusiasm of their heart around praising the Lord. In 5:14, James talks about the role of prayer in a situation when somebody is weakened spiritually, mentally or physically (ἀσθενεῖ).⁹²²

⁹¹⁸ Moo, *The Letter*, 230.

⁹¹⁹ Moo, *The Letter*, 231-233.

⁹²⁰ Moulton, *The Analytical*, 189.

⁹²¹ κακοπαθέω is translated in the New Testament (2 Tim. 2:3, 9, 4:5) by hardship (Thayer, *A Greek English*, 320).

⁹²² McKnight, *The Letter*, 434; Moo, *The Letter*, 236.

James demands this prayer not from the sick person, but from the elders of the church (πρεσβυτέρους τῆς ἐκκλησίας). The concept of assembly of believers is used here for the first time. In this context the elders are persons in the church who can be approached (let him call them-προσκαλεσάσθω τοὺς), they are persons with faith (5:15), who pray for the sick. Prayer in this case is to be made concomitantly with the anointing with oil.⁹²³ Oil as such does not have a certain symbolism, Moo says, since James uses the verb ἀλείφω, however the physical act of anointing with oil has a symbolical significance.⁹²⁴ The meaning consists in the fact that the sick person is put aside by the elders in order to benefit from God's healing and attention full of compassion. Verse 5:15 emphasizes two things: firstly, that the prayer made with faith saves the sick, and secondly, the Lord heals him/her. Moo, according to the principle "never give a word more meaning than the context requires," and to the fact that the verb σώζω was used in a series of texts in the sense of physical healing, thinks that the meaning conferred by the author to the term σώζω in 5:15 is that of healing and not spiritual deliverance.⁹²⁵ In the second part of 5:15, James makes an explicit reference to the forgiving of sins. James wants to assure the believers that God not only heals the sick but is also willing to forgive their sins.

In 5:16 James speaks, again pressingly, about the prayer of intercession for healing in the context where he imperiously asks confession of sins. This shows the fact that the prayer for healing must have a public form, and forgiveness of sins is carried out within the confession of sins. Within the ecclesial background, they can find the solution for their sickness and sins. It is possible that James may have associated both maladies, spiritual and physical, as the sick one can suffer

⁹²³ Ropes, *A Critical*, 305; Moo, *The Letter*, 238. McKnight, *The Letter*, 440.

⁹²⁴ Moo, *The Letter*, 242.

⁹²⁵ Moo, *The Letter*, 243.

from both at the same time. James concludes in 5:16 that the effective prayer of a righteous person has great power. What James notes here is the righteous state of the one who prays. An adequate example is Elijah. The prayers of Elijah, a common man, reached their purpose.

At the end of his epistle, James encourages his readers to get involved in recuperating a fellow Christian from wandering from the truth. This implies saving somebody from dying. As Ropes says, the force of the last words of James resides in the word θάνατον (death). Martin argues the idea that “the connotation of death here is that of eternal consequence rather than only a physical demise”⁹²⁶

Addressivity

Section seven holds an important number of orders which under the addressive aspect become direct commands of Christ addressed to the faithful believer. The imperatives in 5:7-8 “be patient” associated with the imperative “do not grumble against one another” (μὴ στενάζετε, ἄδελφοί) in 5:9 induce the idea that patience has to face the tendency, noticed at some people, to complain about others. By these orders, Christ asks the reader to endure any kind of hardship and even the continuous malice of malevolent neighbours. In 5:12 the negative command of not swearing on anything is completed by the express request to be loyal to the word given. Avoiding duplicity in the manner of expression coincides with avoiding the double behaviour and duplicitous speech highlighted by James in chapters 3 and 4. The text in 5:12, under the addressive aspect, carries along Christ’s voice and thought, which invites to self-reflexion and correction. The verses in 5:13-16 are, also, the means by which the reader can see himself as the object of Christ’s address. God asks the community to facilitate the understanding that prayer is one of God’s imperious

⁹²⁶ Martin, *James*, 219.

requests (προσευχέσθω), both for the one who passes through hardships and for the one who passes through sickness. Also the calling of elders (προσκαλεσάσθω), in the circumstances where the disease demands it, is a request that God is addressing now to the one who is in pain. And lastly, the confession of sins, as a precondition for healing, is Christ's command.

The integrative stage

The last section brings up the continuity of endurance, keeping the word, the intercessory prayer for spiritual and physical healing, and the retrieving of the lost, in the background where James talks about God's immediate coming as Judge (5:7-10) and at the same time as the One who rewards the endurance of the faithful person with mercy and compassion (5:11). The Lord's coming represents the central point of the eschatological scenery highlighted by the book. The divine judgment and the Lord's coming are the *final causes* which normalize the reader's life course. In terms of the *effect* of the text upon the moment when the reader will be judged, we can say that the text has a directive and encouraging character. As the Lord's coming is drawing near, the recipient is advised not to take the law into his/her own hands, but be long-suffering. Then the text helps him/her to keep his/her word, pray, confess sins and help others to return from spiritual aberration. Assuming the principles emanated in this text prepares the believer, even though poor and helpless, to await judgment with joy, as the plowman patiently awaits the sweet fruits of the earth watered in due time by the early and late rain from above.

Conclusion

At the end of the commentary on the Epistle of James, we can synthesize some conclusive data related to the purpose, structure and progressivity of the book and then explore a few final considerations regarding the philosophy of this interpretation.

1. The purpose of the book

As regards the goal of the epistle, we have to say that the faith-works synergy is not the purpose of the book but one of its major conceptual articulations, which, however, has the role of explaining certain principal arguments of the epistle. More precisely, on the basis of the synergic unit (internality-externality) it is possible to prove that performing works with partiality (2:1-13) or refraining from goodness (2:14-26) cannot cohabit with faith in Christ, as both types of actions illustrate, by virtue of the synergic unity, the existence of negative thoughts, which are incompatible with the positivity and constructiveness of faith in God. Also, the self-contentment of the one who declares his faith in Jesus Christ while doing evil denotes, by the very incompatibility of these two things, the tacit acceptance of a duplicitous lifestyle. And this duplicitous living, evidently disavowed by James, reveals a pendulous heart, which attracts more undesired consequences, both in the present and eschatologically (1:7, 26, 4:4). Consequently, those who carry out evil works and pretend they believe in Christ deceive themselves (1:26). We must say, however, that the employment by the author of the faith-works synergy does not firstly concern how somebody can reach salvation, but it demonstrates whether somebody is objectively on his way.

From the first section of the book in 1:4, the author talks about the believer's goal of being freed from duplicity; in 1:6,8, the believer is warned about the fact that he/she has to pray without having a divided soul, and the author underscores again the severity of oscillating between

good and bad; and in 1:26, he points out that the association of religiosity with lack of self-control is a self-deception. Also, in 2:1-13, our attention is drawn to the fact that faith in Christ cannot dwell together with bad works. In 2:13, God's "merciless judgment" is the opposite of the judgment which, by accepting the compromise, expresses vacillation. In 2:14-17, we are shown the duplicitous character of the one who pretends he has faith while abstaining from doing good things. Using the tongue both for good and evil denotes the inconsistency of walking on two paths, and is condemned by James in 3:10-12. In 3:13, 17, we read that the tongue should be connected to the wisdom above which is "without hypocrisy." In 4:4, the oscillating soul is named an "adulterous soul." Thus, the soul which always slides between the devil and God, leading a double life, is expected to cut off this mode of being, attaching exclusively and definitively to God.

Subsequently, the repetition of these accents and their extension in the space of the book lead us to believe that James' purpose is threefold, aiming at the complete removal of vacillation and total attachment to God. First of all, he wants to remind his readers that the goal of their lives is to attach to God without oscillation. Second, he seeks to show, in accord with the principle of synergic unity, that they are duplicitous, and if they continue like this they will deceive themselves. And thirdly, he calls his readers to evaluate their vacillation without delay, and wholly to cleanse both the way they think and act.

2. The structure of the book

In what follows, I intend to explicate the structure of the book by means of its primary sections.

The first major section comprises chapter 1:2-27. At the beginning of this section the author invites his readers to accept the trial of their

faith with joy, taking into account its final result, materialized in “perfection,” completeness and lacking in nothing (1:2-4). But if wisdom is missing, then it has to be asked from God by the prayer made with faith (1:5-7) and without any doubt. A man who vacillates between God and world, like a wave of the sea blown by the wind, should not expect to receive anything from God. Certainly, such a man does not show a state of perfection and integrity. Since the trial of faith leads, by means of patience, to perfection, and doubt is a real drawback in the way of receiving the things that God is generously willing to offer, then the brother who is poor (1:9) but loves God and believes in him (2:5) reaches perfection and will be praised (1:9) up to the point that he will be made heir of God’s kingdom (2:5). Unlike the poor man, the rich man pursues the natural and inexorable course of an irreversible tragic destiny. Therefore, James points out in 1:12 that the joy is on the side of the person who enrolls, by loving God, on the road of bearing the trial - (πειρασμόν), because he is the one who will receive the crown of life. The noun πειρασμόν (trial) brings up the concept of “tempting” denoted by the verb πειραζόμενος (being tempted) and understood in verse 1:13 as somebody’s resolve to do evil. The trial of faith can easily be considered a temptation from God, if one does not take into account that God does not do evil to anyone. But the very mistake of reckoning God a mediator of evil is tackled by James in 1:13. In order to remove this mistaken mindset, the author argues in favour of God’s exceptional kindness. Before proving God’s good character, James explains in a few words the real motive of temptation. Anyone who commits sin is determined to do it by the very evil lust which is born in him. Therefore, the tacit admission of lust in the sphere of thinking is in fact the thing which makes man do evil, it is not God (1:13-15). On the contrary, God is good and this is proved by the fact that everything that is good, the birth of the believers by the Word included, is from above, namely from God (1:17-18). The source of all good things is God. In the last part of this section James asks the believers

born by the Word to be doers of His teachings because only the doer will be happy in his works.

In the second section of the epistle, 2:1-26, James condemns the act of discrimination in which believers are involved at the level of their religious community. There are four reasons why James blames partiality. Firstly, partiality is not a virtue but a sin, and it reveals the existence of sinful thoughts. Evil thoughts, certainly, cannot cohabit with faith, because this would demonstrate the person's walking on two paths. Secondly, partiality is not acceptable because God, the one in whom believers trust and who rewards love and mercy with so much generosity is not partial, on the contrary, he bends with kindness towards the poor and despised ones. Thirdly, partiality does not evince love for the neighbour and, in this case, it contravenes the royal law which demands the love of neighbours. Lastly, partiality cannot be admitted among believers because it does not show mercy towards neighbours. And the one who does not have mercy will be judged without mercy. Further on, in the same section, the author tries to persuade his addressees that faith without works is useless and dead. Faith can be assessed by works because faith "works together with" deeds. Abraham as well as Rahab was justified because his works showed the existence of his faith in God. James ends by saying that as someone's body is dead if they do not have respiratory movements (breath), likewise someone's faith is dead if they do not perform the regular activity of good works.

In the third section, James talks about the believers' unedifying speech and chiefly about the guileful language. I have included all the verses from 3:1-18 in this section, understanding on the one hand that quarrel and praise in 3:13 are forms of speech, certainly, evil and undesirable, and on the other hand that the logic in 3:13-14, based on the synergic relationship between source and product, is identical with the one expressed by the author in 3:10-12.

The fourth major section (4:1-10) of the epistle represents the author's calling to repentance, namely to acknowledge and give up on the oscillation between the fragmentary attachment to God and the exercise of malice in community. At the beginning of this section James seems to reiterate the sphere of communication, inter-human relationships and unfulfilled prayers from the previous sections, explaining the way in which negative speech (the topic of the third chapter), conflicts (the inter-human relationship being the topic of the second chapter) and unaccomplished prayer (a subtopic of chapter one) have their origin in lust (ἡδονή), another word for evil lusts in 1:14-15. In this framework, the author defines in harsh words friendship with the world, indicating that God wants his people, with jealousy, for himself (4:15). Then, after he affirms that God gives grace to those who are humble (4:6), James calls his recipients to submission and cathartic drawing near to God. The cleansing of heart and hands concerns man's integral cleansing, not only his thoughts, but his deeds as well. This calling to total repentance concerns both the evaluation of one's own person starting from the reality of facts and drainage from the mind of unfaithful thoughts.

The fifth section (4:11-17), right after the author requires his readers' repentance and cleansing, brings again to the reader's attention several normative issues regarding speech (4:11-17). In verses 4:11-12, James attacks the topic of ill-speaking, and in verses 4:13-17 he brings to light the egocentric character of self-praise.

The sixth section (5:1-6) of the epistle brings again to the addressees' attention the issue of the relationships within the community, especially the relationship of exploitation and the criminal deeds perpetrated by wealthy people against those who are defenseless but righteous (5:1-6).

Eventually, in the seventh section (5:7-20) of the epistle, James encourages his readers to stand (5:7-11) the trial, because "the Lord's

coming is close.” In 5:12 the author continues by asking the believers not to oscillate between “yes” or “no,” which reminds us again of the wave of the sea tossed with uncertainty from 1:6. And in the final part of this last section, James brings up again the important role of prayer (5:13-18). The prayer for forgiveness of sins and healing of the body shows again the fact that God is interested in man’s well-being in his integrality: soul and body. The last two verses of the epistle, 5:19-20, demonstrate the author’s fraternal concern for those who are lost from the truth, in this context of those who act in contradiction with the faith they display.

As a conclusion to this review of the epistle’s sections, one can note that the last three sections, respectively five, six and seven, correspond to the central topics of section one, two and three as if the author tried by the last three sections to conclude the issues raised by him in the first three sections of the epistle. More precisely, in the fifth section James writes on speech, and this thing seems to be an extension of the third section, or a conclusive return to it. Then, in the sixth section, James incriminates the exploitative and criminal works of the rich towards the poor, with the same critical spirit with which in the second section he attacks the injustice of the discriminative action of some in the assembly towards the poor. Also, in the last section the author saves in a different way some room for discussing certain topics which have been brought to the readers’ attention previously in the first section. We can find among these topics: patience, consistency regarding the word given, and prayer made with faith. Sections five, six and seven mirror sections three, two and one. And section four, due to its unique, restoring nature enjoys a central position in the epistle. For an easier observation of the thematic resemblance between the last three and the first three sections of the epistle, I suggest the following thematic presentation of the sections:

Table 7. The seven sections of James

The number of the section	The verses of the section	Topics	Re-presentation
The first section	(1:1-27)	On patience, faith, prayer, exaltation and the crown of life, temptation, God's character and fulfilling the Word	A
The second section	(2:1-26)	On inter-human relationships	B
The third section	(3:1-18)	On inter-human communication	C
The fourth section	(4:1-10)	On the calling to repentance and cleansing which consists in the removal of vacillation and the exclusive attachment to God	D
The fifth section	(4:11-17)	On inter-human communication	C'
The sixth section	(5:1-6)	On inter-human relationships	B'
The seventh section	(5:7-20)	On patience, consistency regarding the word given, prayer made with faith, and the salvation of those who are lost from the truth	A'

3. The progressivity of the epistle

As we have already shown, the major topics of the epistle, respectively the trial of the faith (chapter 1), inter-human relationships (chapter 2) and inter-human communication (chapter 3) are followed by section four, with the calling to repentance (first part of chapter 4) expressed mainly by the exclusive attachment to God. Since the last three sections of the epistle, highlighted above, are nothing but a return to the topics of the epistle presented in the previous chapters, then it is very probable for the author to have said what he had to say in the first four sections.

There are three reasons which could make us believe that the author of the epistle makes his point within the first four sections of the book. Firstly, the author does not bring up new topics in the last three sections, on the contrary he itemizes certain matters about which he writes in the first four sections. Secondly, it is not inessential either that most of the synergic pairs are found in the first four sections of the epistle, which demonstrates that the argumentation built by James in the first three sections ends with section four. The ratio between the number of pairs in the last three sections and the number of pairs in the four sections is net inferior. Thirdly, beside the accent having already changed towards that of the first part in chapter four, the author repeats the topics already brought to the readers' attention in the first sections. Davids notices this general element, pointing out that the verses in the final sections are not out of context: "On the other hand, as part of the total context here these verses are hardly inappropriate: they serve a

redactional function. Most of the themes mentioned in them are picked up from previous sections (1:9-26; 2:8; 3:1-18)."⁹²⁷

In section four, 4:1-10, James asks his addressees, accused of double friendship with God and world, to cleanse both their hearts and hands, appealing again, to the same extent, to the internality and externality of the being (4:8). Although the author's call to believers to eliminate the adulterine habits is clear, James' motivation for the integral cleansing - mind and body - still remains *vague*, in Peirce's terms.

This element of *vagueness*, though, could be resolved if we admitted the hypothesis that the author was guided in the process of writing the epistle by the Jewish paradigm of the unity between thinking and action. Had we, therefore, conceded that the author was determined in his writing by a synergist mindset, in other words, by the paradigm of the faith-works unity, then the express and culminating urge to integral cleansing would be a *matter of course*.

It can thus be possible for the author to make appeal to exponents of internality in a pairing with those of externality, with the aim of gradually preparing his readers for the call to integral cleansing, which implies that the addressee of the epistle is expected to assess not only the thoughts of his heart but also his works to be accomplished regularly. The evaluation of the heart's thoughts is not enough without a consistent surveillance of the quality of deeds.

Coming back to synergic pairs and their role for explaining the call to integral cleansing, I can stress the following. In 1:2-4, James evokes the perfection of believers as a target worthy to be pursued. In the context when James talks about the trial and value of faith, he insists on stressing that its lack is both an internal state of the soul as well as a mode of conduct. Here James underlines the first synergic pair by equally

⁹²⁷ Davids, *The Epistle*, 169.

emphasizing the internality and externality of the human being. The next two synergic pairs (1:15, 18 and 20) express the fact that what exists at the mental level reverberates in the realm of acts. Approaching critically the base fact of partiality, James attempts to persuade his addressees that discrimination toward the unprestigious denotes the existence of evil thoughts in the very supreme forum of their judgment faculty. So, the synergic pair in 2:1-4 shows that what exists at the level of actions reflects what exists in the mental state. Furthermore, the mind-body pairs, evoked in the second part of section two, point out explicitly the fact that mind and action are in synergic relationship.

Having stated this principle, central to his epistle, James goes further, progressively, in chapter three, holding that duplicity in speech cannot be anything else but an objective reflection of the inner state of the speaker (a different approach from the one in chapter 2, where the focus is rather on relationship than verbal communication). And this is why James employs the synergic pairs in 3:11, 12 and 13. He does not stop here, seeming to be outraged by the masquerade of the believers who pretend to be Christians while talking and behaving with duplicity and violence, and based on the synergic principle in 2:22, he asks them firmly that, if they have bitter envy and strife in their hearts, not to lie with indifference, despite the concrete reality of their deeds. If they cannot hide the decaying state where they slipped in their integrality, mind and actions, and they cannot lie against the reality of their way of being, then it is of the utmost importance for them to repent and then cleanse both their hands and hearts. At this point, James uses two synergic pairs: 4:8 and 4:9.

It is obvious that God has in view, equally, the soul (the internal part of the being) as well as the works of the man (the external part) who prays (the section about the trial, 1:7-8). Due to the fact that the nature of evil works (externality) recalls the negative character of thoughts

(internality) (the section about the ecclesial relationship, 2:1,4), and also, because internality and externality are in a synergic unity (the second part of section two, 2:22), and because man's interior moral condition outpours unabashedly into deeds (externality) carried out regularly (3:14), as a fountain which pours forth its waters in the river bed and like a grapevine which does not bear other fruit than grapes (the section about communication), then it is explicable why, in section four, the author requires the cleansing of the duplicitous man in his integrality.

4. Final considerations

The interpretive approach of *integrative semiotics* pursues two issues. Firstly, it seeks to avoid the division of faith into the theoretical and the practical. Owing to the synergist mindset, "faith without works" has been understood as faith that has no good works, and acts by omission. At the same time, references to internality and externality in the epistle have been noted and taken into account evenly, which has helped us to explain the author's call to integral cleansing, a climax in the progressivity of the epistle. Secondly, it intends to unite biblical scholarship with faith and action. Thus, for the interpretive approach of *integrative semiotics*, the meaning of the Epistle of James is not reduced to a general, informational, distant conception of the book, but to an approach of the book which, being intermediated by the Holy Spirit *creatively*, is carried out from the perspective of its effect upon the reader found in the space and time permeated by Jesus Christ in a profound and substantial way.

This research intended to diminish the vagueness (complexity) of the epistle regarding its structure and purpose. Broadly, the study of the Epistle of James was methodologically marked by the hermeneutics of

“integrative semiotics” with its three steps - quantitative, addressive and integrative - explained in full in the chapter on methodology.

At the start we noted the faith-works relationship in 2:22 and the synergism which characterizes it. In a quantitative manner, we detached it mentally from the original text and its object of reference (recall here that the procedure of abstracting a word in this manner is called by Peirce “hypostatic abstraction,” a common and ordinary cognitive operation), operating with this relationship under its *general* aspect (“pure abstraction”). We thus observed that there is a *similitude between* this synergic relation and other 29 such relations found in the Epistle, called *generically*, in the preamble, “synergic pairs.” Fructifying further the formal logic in Peirce’s semiotics, we worked with the explicative hypothesis that the reason which underlies the entire Epistle of James is non-dualist, synergic, and peculiar to the antique Jewish thinking. According to the latter, faith, as any other exponent of interiority, is structurally united with works, which are indices of exteriority. Having accepted the hypothesis that James’ mindset is a synergist one, we observed that the climax of the Epistle in 4:8, namely the call of the recipients to cleanse both their hands, as exponent of works, and their heart, as exponent of man’s interiority, is purely and simply a *matter of course*. In this way, we diminished the degree of *vagueness* (complexity) which largely characterized the paradigmatic nature of the epistle.

We then observed that the reiteration of the idea of duplicity can be best explicated if we think that the purpose of the Epistle of James consists in converting its addressees from their chronic vacillation, to their eventual spiritual union with God. We observed that both the number of these repetitions and their placement throughout the Epistle validates such an interpretation. Both in the case of deciphering the purpose of the epistle and decrypting the paradigm of the epistle, we appealed initially to

an abductive approach, specific to Peirce's formal logic. In essence, the quantitative step has a heuristic nature.

Also, by abstracting the terms from their context, which is to observe them under a general aspect, an eminently quantitative procedure, we ascertained that the central terms/ideas in sections C', B' and A' *resembled* the central terms/ideas in sections A, B and C, which made us reach the conclusion that the structure of the book is divided in two parts, and the last one reflects, like a mirror, the content of the first one.

Since sections C', B' and A' are a revision of sections A, B, and C, this led us to consider, hypothetically, that the first four sections of the epistle (A, B, C and D) play a main role in it overall. Also, we showed in a quantitative manner that, if we take into consideration the conjecture that A, B, C and D are central, then their arrangement 'in a mirror' is a *matter of fact*. Thus, the sections C', B' and A' have a recapitulative character. We verified the hypothesis of the centrality of the first four sections by taking into account three questions that are related to contents, continuity and themes. These three issues proved that the epistle has a thematic progressivity (sections A, B and C) and a climax (section D).

The second, addressive, step involved receiving the Epistle of James as an epistolary discourse and, at the same time, as divine address. The referentiality of the Epistle as a whole underscores the stress that the author lays on the abandonment of duplicity in relation with God and the express call to the exclusive attachment to Him. To retrieve the addressivity of the text involves understanding it *creatively* (the Holy Spirit coordinates the hermeneutic exercise), namely, the text is regarded as the context and means of God's self-communication, in Christ, to the reader. Consequently, the author's call to eliminate duplicity in relation

with God becomes, by the addressive retrieval of the text, God's express will addressed to the reader of the Epistle of James.

In particular, there are diverse paragraphs or sections in the epistle which, by virtue of the fact that they are essentially speech acts, have an intrinsically dialogical nature. They can thus function as the quantitative instrument of the transmissive self-communication and compassion of God in Christ; as conveyors of God's voice *here and now*. So the imperatives of the Epistle, its universal interrogations and general statements are recaptured under the addressive aspect and appreciated as being God's reader-addressed imperatives, interrogatives and statements. The reader of the Epistle of James, therefore, looks at himself as the receiver of the self-disclosure of the will of God in Christ through the different sections of the epistle regarding patience, faith, prayer, temptation, fulfilling the Word, consistent speech, moral character, repentance, salvation of those who are lost from the truth, but especially, the removal of vacillation and their exclusive attachment to God. The Epistle of James, under the addressive aspect is not only a writing for *then* and *there*, but a text for *here and now* as well. The removal of vacillation and people's attachment to God concerns equally both the original recipients and contemporary readers. The addressivity of the text highlights its temporal polyvalence (the text is a message for then, but mostly for now), and on the other hand it emphasizes the communication of God's will in Christ, related to the intentional matter of fidelity, through the writing of James, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The third step is the understanding of the text under the integrative aspect, which concerns receiving it by means of self-reflexive thinking. The reader, facing the self-communication of God in Christ through the Epistle of James (presentness), will arrive at reading the text by "reading" him/herself (self-responsivity), integrating into this enterprise his/her whole being. Under the *integrative* aspect, namely the

aspect where the author integrates, in a self-evaluating mode, his whole being, with present and future, in the act of reading the text, the Epistle of James is grasped in the light of the whole-person transformation that the text might produce.

Due to the fact that the *integrative* meaning of the text presupposes a certain teleological orientation, then the reader will ask him/herself some questions concerning the sense of the sections of the epistle for him/herself, taking account of the destination that he wants to reach or that he considers he will reach inevitably. As I have shown before, the anticipation of the ensuing conditions of the reader, aware of his own successive nature, is accomplished based on the revelation in Scripture, similar to the scientific (probable) prediction which is carried out based on previous experience. The anticipative element of the *integrative* aspect of the text emphasizes a fundamental action of the reader, which is his perpetual return to the text as text. This means that the reader becomes accustomed to a rather text-centered hermeneutical orientation than a reader-centered one. The reader sees his future not in an imaginary, subjective way, but from the viewpoint of his biblical predictions. This last detail evokes too the prophetic character of the integrative aspect, which makes the integrative semiotics arouse a prophetic or predictive hermeneutic.

As regards solely the commentary, within each paragraph, by means of the *integrative stage*, we went on to note the eschatological reference points to which the text alludes: reward (1:12), the salvation of the soul (1:22, 2:14), inheritance (2:5), divine judgment (2:12-13), the fire of Gehenna (3:6) and the Lord's return (5:7,8). Therewith, we realized that the way in which the text contributes to fulfilling the eschatological desideratum stirred by these hallmarks of the future (they represent in fact the *final cause* of the interpretation), aids us in drawing out the full meaning of the Epistle of James. More precisely, we noticed,

imaginatively, the effects that the text has upon the interpreter in his/her predictable condition. Subsequently, the mindset that we have with respect to those imaginable effects contributes considerably to our understanding of the smaller and large sections of the book. This is why there are the following paragraphs: motivational-paradigmatic (1:2-4), motivational and spiritual (1:5-8), paradigmatic and eschatological (1:9-11), soteriological (1:12-21, 1:22-27, 2:1-13, 2:14-26, 4:11-17), instructive (3:1-18), eschatological and corrective (4:1-10), anticipative (5:1-6), regulative and encouraging (5:7-20). Once the reader establishes with conviction and anticipatively what exactly the Epistle of James contributes to at the following stage in his life, he will be able to adopt the habits of thinking and behavior transmitted by God in Christ through the person and text of James. So, giving up on vacillation and attaching exclusively to God are the habits that the reader will want to assume after reading the Epistle. The reader's ensuing practice of life will then confirm both the transformational capacity of James' text and, implicitly, the reader's beliefs in the spiritual values of the text. Adopting these habits confirms the agreement of the interpreter's life with God's will manifested in Christ, through James' text. As this agreement constitutes the object of study of pastoral theology, then we can say that the interpretive approach of "integrative semiotics" attends successfully to pastoral theology. Finally, the contents, structure and purpose of the Epistle of James have been approached from a hermeneutic perspective which, as I have shown before, is characterized by a prophetic nature, transformational value and pastoral function, that coincides with the paradigm of the synergic unity between thinking and action.

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